

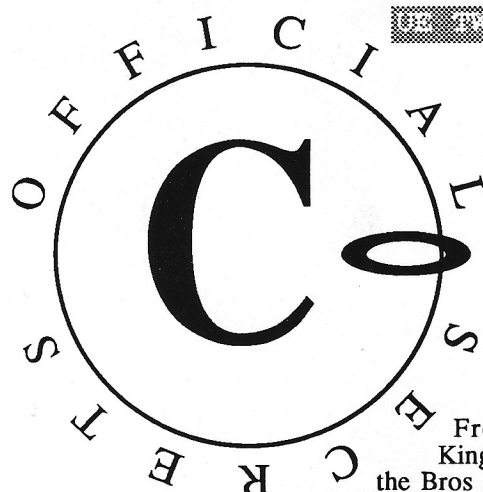
**CONFIDENTIAL**

**FILE NUMBER TWELVE**

August/September 1990

Members' Eyes Only





# CONFIDENTIAL

The adventure, strategy and role-playing magazine

## Contents

**The Psst... Page 1**  
From a Jack to a King. The Boss and the Bros of the office are at it again. Different pics. Different place. Same old prattle!

**NewsFile Page 2**  
Agent Orange sets the presses rolling with some up-to-the-minute news of the Summer releases.

**A Guide To Wonderland Page 5**  
At last they've let us get our sticky little fingers on the adventure game of 1990. Has Anita delivered the goods? We get some hands-on experience and tell all.

**Through the Keyhole Page 8**  
This new section kicks off with a talk with FTL's President, Wayne Holder as we delve into the secrets behind the ultimate role-playing game and it's sequel.

**Puzzlebox Page 10**  
Richard Paynter is looking for a publisher for his *STAC*'ed adventure. Is there hope that it will ever see the light of day? Confidential explores the possibilities...

**The Magic Candle Page 12**  
Paul Rigby joins The C-Team for an Issue to drool over a new *Ultima*-style game that is ready to make it big in the UK.

**MugScan Page 14**  
The world of the Multi-User game goes sci-fi as Pippin gets to grips with the new *Empyrium* brainchild.

**The Team/Sierra Compo Page 15**  
Some new misfortunates join us in our ever-expanding offices and Sierra On-Line give us some great prizes to give away.

**Battle Ground Page 16**  
Our own master tactician, George Lunn is back to bring you another round-up of the wargaming front including some war correspondence.

**Home Adventure Market Page 18**  
Trevillian finds that two Issue's just weren't enough to tell you about the many independent adventure software companies out there in the big, bad world.

**Kirk Green Interview Page 20**  
Reading has been a hive of industry lately as Sierra On-Line's PR Director Kirk Green flies in from America to unveil Sierra's Autumn range of products. The top fifteen UK journalists were present, and of course we were there (hiding at the back where nobody could see us).

**The Wizard Page 28**  
The penultimate piece from the puny pragmaturgist, this time looking at cyphers, codes and... Death!

**Battleground PBM Page 24**  
Kevin Trebell has decided that he liked play-by-mail very much and returns to give us an in-depth look at this sci-fi power game (not to be confused with Page 16).

**The Wayfarer's Inn Page 26**  
Confidential Papers has given in at last and published another Ian Urquhart masterpiece (his words, not ours!).

**Puzzle Page Page 28**  
Big Ron gets smaller. Tom O'Toole gets mixed-up. You get prizes. Good 'ere innit!

**For Your Eyes Only... Page 31**  
Beeping noises from beneath the stairs have been causing some confusion lately. The Man In Black investigates the cause... but not the symptom (Funny how you can tell that the Editor's been to Rocky Horror!).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Issue, the Boss Upstairs just has to give big bouquets of flowers to The Team who are now: John "Don't smudge my lipstick" Trevillian (for being such a sweet transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania), John "Everything's just SO fabulous" Knight (for being totally totally wonderful), Debbie "Take that lipstick off, John!" Magrane (for not really getting into the *Rocky Horror* spirit), and Dave "Uh-uh-uh-UH... Aaaaarrggghhh! How was it for you, darling" Perry (for somehow fitting into life in the O/S office perfectly). And, Vera "Wipeout" Sawyer, (for wiping out).

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# Psst... A WORD FROM THE BOSS UPSTAIRS



NOW OFFICIALLY 2 YEARS OLD!

Avid supporters of the clubs will be pleased to learn that we have been experiencing record sales and record numbers of new members joining. Membership of Special Reserve totals more than 25,000, of whom around 5500 are also members of Official Secrets. The recent rise is due to our change to colour advertising and the extensive range of major titles which are featured in our Mega Savers list.

Some people say the price of joining Official Secrets is too high, but in the early days the club was heavily subsidised and even now the profits are not high. The next price rise for membership, up from £27.99 to £29.99, will be the last for some time and overall I think it is still good value for money. The present offer includes *Sim City* or *Drakkhen* for which people normally have to pay at least £13.99 and Special Reserve membership, at £6.00, is also included. So the extra cost of joining Official Secrets, assuming you would want *Sim City* or *Drakkhen* for your collection, is just £10.00, and this includes *Myth* as well as Confidential and the Helpline.

Most of the computer games trade are reporting poor sales due to the tradi-

tional summer lull, when it's more important to have holiday money than it is to buy computer games. However, the ongoing success of the Amiga is still pushing the games market forward and there is every reason to believe that the Autumn period will see demand rising to a level higher than in previous years. Even now, at the end of July, we have to consider what level of sales we must plan for over Christmas and Inter-Mediate is having a mid-summer overhaul in preparation for the upsurge. Particular attention is going into upgrading the Customer Service department, which will have three groups of three staff working overlapping shifts. A new telephone system will shortly be installed to give the department three sales-lines plus two enquiry-lines and one help-line. Each group of staff will have a supervisor and the whole department is now expected to put the capital S firmly back in Service.

You will see changes this month in your bi-monthly literature: David Perry has joined the editorial/design team who have all worked extremely hard to bring out the first full-colour edition of NRG. I think a special mention must go to Paul Morgan who designed the NRG characters.

If we can find suitable premises we will be opening a shop. The purpose is to avoid the queues in our despatch department and so that calling customers can properly browse our selection of games. We have decided to support the Atari Lynx and the Sega Megadrive, and the shop will give us the opportunity to demonstrate these products. Commodore's CDTV will also be heavily backed by us as soon as it appears. Personally I can't wait to get my hands on one.

We are currently recruiting staff and the total number of personnel working on the clubs will rise to forty by the end of August (if you are interested in working here please write or phone, we offer low pay and long hours but it's all good fun - ask Vera). I hope you will find that the clubs, which are officially two years old on August 1st, are maturing and becoming more professional. We intend our service to continue to improve despite retaining our low prices and wide range of software. And if that sounds like a sales pitch then.. well yes.. we hope you'll continue to avidly support us.

THE BOSS UPSTAIRS

## JOHN KNIGHT'S A Little Psst... Downstairs

Hi to all the new members who have just joined us. This is MY section with all the info you'll ever need to get you through the week... I don't think!

Changing the subject from nice Kylie lover to Iron Maiden lover - who was the culprit who filled last issues questionnaire in by adding 'CRAP' in answer to the question, "What do you think of the Little Psst...?" Would the member please recall what happened to the lamb in *Myth*?

The recent hot weather certainly hasn't kept you all outside in the sun as the solutions have been arriving thick and fast, but are still waiting for any help on *Loom*, *The Magic Candle*, *Escape From Hell* and *Dragon's Breath*. The winners of the Solution Draw are J. Weatherley and P. Kerr. They sent us

the first solution to *Ultima 6*. If you have a solution that you think we may need, send it in and you could win software to the value of £24.99. Sounds good? Then get cracking!

After the office barbeque last weekend I was surprised to see that Vera showed her face on Monday. After a brisk jog around the riverbank she insisted on showing off her new break dancing techniques with sumo wrestling competitions to follow. We all decided that it would be a good idea to let Agent Trevillian cool down after nearly hyper-ventilating when Vera asked him for a dance... so we threw him in the river! Great fun are these Inter-Mediate doos!

I would like to mention some special people in my new Hall of 'Shame' sec-



tion. Cathy 'Thank-you' Nash - for putting up with me for so long (I lurve you). Mandie 'Loose' Remnant - for being such an understanding friend. And last but not least, Tara and Kimberley for just being there...

Ah well, now I've got all the sloppy mentions over with, it's time for me to depart from this page and leave you all pinning for me until next Issue.....

JOHN KNIGHT



# AGENT ORANGE'S NEWSFILE

Issue No. 11,366

Monday 6th August 1990

Published in Inverness

45p

## Secrets Unearthed!

### SSI unleash third RPG onto unsuspecting world



AFTER LAST Issue's news of the new releases on the AD&D computer range, a new parcel arrived for us totally out of the blue.

*Secret of the Silver Blades* is its name and it is billed as

#### Report by Agent Orange

being the sequel to *Pool of Radiance* and *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. Improvements have been made and the whole package, though similar in appearance, is said to be much more polished.

The plot is throwaway; miners are digging in uncharted ground only to find that they have disturbed a great evil. The ensuing cry for help takes you and your hearty group of adventurers into caverns deep underground in search of whatever it is that they have uncovered.

The game packaging again follows the now standard arrangement of rulebook and technical card, plus an Adventurer's Journal which includes all the information that you need to exist in the fantasy world (ie. combat, magic, treasures, creatures, spells and a journal that is referred to whilst playing the game).

Copies are only available on the IBM to start with, and hopefully others will follow - once bitten, twice shy. We'll believe it when we see it!



A NEW Disney label has been launched in partnership with Nathan Software and Titus.

Their games will fall into three main categories; Entertainment, Children's and Creativity. Initially there is not much planned for the adventurer, but in the children's department there are a lot of educational titles that could certainly fall into the group and come with the cutest of titles - *Mickey's Runaway Zoo* and *Goofy's Railway Express* being just two examples. Expect these to start appearing around September.

#### INSIDE

IN THE heat of these long Summer evenings, programmers like to take it easy and so there is less to report than usual. Faint rumours and tantalising tidbits about forthcoming adventure releases are buzzing around at the moment, but no firm news until everyone comes back from their summer hols. Still, we seem to have filled the file with all the latest flight simulators that are appearing - well, actually, they all seem to be funky add-ons to previous mega-titles. Hopefully there will be more news of the Autumn releases next time... and until then make yourself at home with this little lot...

#### LOTS II - finally...



LEGEND OF the Sword first appeared way back in Issue Two - and that was a s a b s o l u t e l y y o n k s a g o !

At that time they promised us a sequel and ten issue's later - here it is!

The Final Battle (LOTS 2) is a far cry from the original, having a full weather generator, real-time system and 3D views of every location. They say that it's the most advanced adventure system to date - and when they send me a promo copy, I'll let you know if they're right.

#### CINEMAWARE NEWS

### Reach For The Skies!

NOW SHOWING at the Cinemaware pictures this Summer is the Word War I dog-fighting classic, *Wings*.

Without the hi-tech controls of the latest flight sims, *Wings* throws you into the midst of surviving until the end of the war in 1918. Sounds easy? Well the lifespan for pilots in WWI was three weeks. Here you'll find a huge amount of missions, covering subjects like bombing U-boats to flying escort into enemy territory. The whole thing hangs together with the usual 3D views and cinematic graphics scenes that we have come to expect ever since *Defender of the Crown*.

And if you are fed up with the usual run-of-the-mill flight sim, try a different approach with *Wings*.

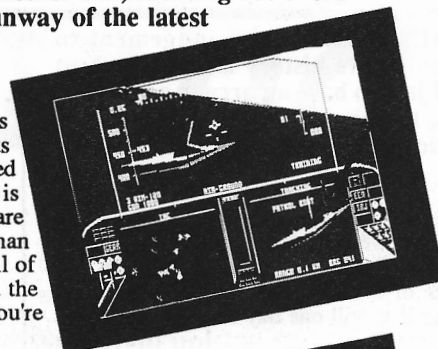


# The best...?

**TAKING WING** this Summer come a whole new range of flight simulators which look set swamp the market by early Autumn. Every time you turn around there's another one, zooming out of the hanger and into the charts. So let's get a rundown from the runway of the latest titles...

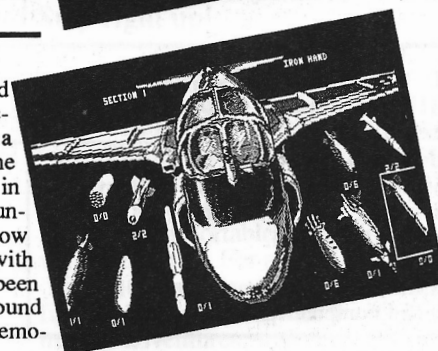
## BEST VS THE REST?

Stealth is the name of the game in the Air Force these days. Planes can be as good as you like, but they still explode rather easily when a missile hits them. So now it's more to do with hiding than blasting, and this is mirrored by the latest Microprose simulation, *F-19 Stealth Fighter*. The criteria list is pretty impressive with 192-page manual, 400 missions and 2 million square miles of playing area! Mix this with a game that runs 30-40% faster than *Falcon* and it looks like a sizzler. *F-19* (the Air Force call it F-117A) is full of touches that really pull it into a league of its own - I especially flipped at the TrakCam that locks into targets and magnifies them for better views! If you're serious about flight sims, you can't get much seriouser than *Stealth Fighter*.



## FLIGHT PATH

Book titles have always been a popular source of computer themes and *Flight of the Intruder* started its life as a novel by Stephen Coonts. Spectrum Holobyte have gotten their sticky little hands on it and turned it into a game that throws *Falcon* (their previous best-seller) into the shade. The game follows the book inasmuch as it is set during Linebacker campaign in 1972 over North Vietnam. Jetting around, you come across some pretty stunning graphical sequences and it cuts everything down to a minimum to allow for faster, higher visibility graphics. It compares favourably with *F-19*, with realism top of the list as a definite priority. The only thing that has not been improved upon is the sound. *Falcon* had a digitised soundtrack pulsing around in the background, but with all the improvements, there just isn't enough memory to squander on fancy music!



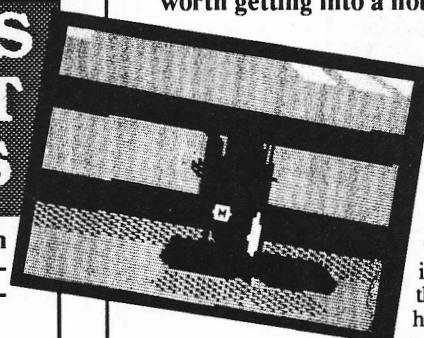
**AND IF** you are getting bored with last year's flight sims, you don't have to splash out on a whole new game. Here are a few add-ons that are well worth getting into a hot sweat over.

## DOOM'S LAST DAYS

**AND STUCK** down between all these flight simulation programs sit a real, honest-to-goodness text adventure.

Text! Text! Text! Over 150k of text and a reported 218 locations, all bundled up in the final part of the Doom Trilogy. Last Days Of Doom picks up where Countdown and Return To Doom left off. Accompanied by your trusty robotic dog, you visit a ruined city, and are instantly assaulted by a host of original Killworth puzzles. Also included, the space oddity in this sci-fi adventure is the Robot Dog Construction Kit - whatever that is!

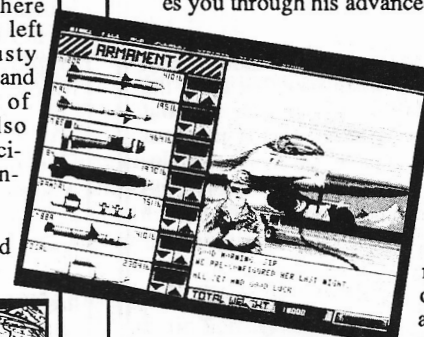
Available for Spectrum +3, Amstrad PCW, CPC and Archimedes.



and unlimited camera angles, just for those of you who want to hang out of the back of an F-117A Stealth Fighter as you swing into a high-speed Yo-Yo. All this and an audio tape of Chuck as he coaches you through his advanced Six Day Flight School. Oooooohh!

## CHUCKING UP AGAIN!

Good ol' Chuck Yeager is back again with another *Advanced Flight Trainer*, this time version 2.0. It makes an impressive leap from the 8-bit formats and arrives for the ST and the Amiga. The enhanced version contains 18 planes with some neat modelled graphics, including the Space Shuttle. With all that memory to waste, Electronic Arts have squandered it liberally with some all-new realistic terrain, airports



## SECOND MISSION

Mirrorsoft are always quick to pick up on a good quote and they didn't waste a nanosecond telling us that *Falcon* is the most successful 16-bit simulation of all time. Well, for all of you who put the game where it is today, here's a second mission disk that extends the original concept one step further. The overriding objective is to foil air attacks as well as being successful in ground attack missions. The odds are stacked against you though as the enemy are capable of launching two separate attacks on your territory using up to five aircraft. Leading on the Amiga and ST, this is another worthy extension to a polished flight sim.

**+ + + ALSO LOOK OUT FOR FIGHTER BOMBER ADVANCED MISSION DISK FROM ACTIVISION + +**

...and the rest!



# TIME MACHINE

**USING SKILL and judgement to manipulate history is a very broad subject to base an arcade adventure on, but the programmers of *Time Machine* say that they have done it.**

By interfering with evolution you must escape a time warp by returning to the future - whilst keeping it exactly the same - after all you don't want to upset the balance of evolution and wipe out the creatures that will one day become your forebearers!

This game is billed as a 4D fantasy role-playing arcade adventure, which is quite a mouthful. The game has been developed by Vivid Image, the software house that developed such creations as *Hammerfist*, though this is a little bit of a departure for them. Oh well, nothing like trying not to be typecast!

Should see the light at the end of the time warp in August on C64, ST, Amiga, Spectrum and Amstrad computers. So until then, it's just a jump to the left, and then a step to the right...

A L E X E Y  
PAJITNOV has  
done it again!

And if this name means nothing to you then you missed out on buying *Tetris*, the most frustrating block game in the world.

But now there's a follow-up in the hugely successful computer puzzle in the form of

## WELLTRIS

*Welltris*, a three-dimensional version of the original game. Now you

view the blocks from above and twist them as they fall around the four walls of the well. With the usual array of settings, speeds and shapes the game is as hard or as easy as you like - but one thing is for sure - it will always be mega-frustrating and leave you wanting 'just one more game'.

# balance of the PLANET



**ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES have become something of talking point in every vein of life, so it is not surprising to see them overspilling into the computer world.**

*Balance of the Planet* places you at the head of the Earth's future by appointing you the Commissioner of the Environment (gawd 'elp us!), and in this role you have to tackle every one of the world's needs. And it all starts mere seconds after you start playing the game.

Your goal is to gain points. This is done for doing environmentally good things. Conversely, you lose points for bad

things (like people dying of air pollution or radiation sickness or from having a nuclear power station goes into meltdown at the bottom of their garden).

The whole game is directed in a series of menus and colourful screen layouts, each one dealing with a different part of the environment. These are

detailed in the extensive manual - it all looks daunting when you first open the box and it falls out into your lap, but essentially it is all made up of information to whet your appetite of world ecology after you've got sick of the game. But that, let me tell you now, is going to be a long way away.



## WILDFIRE RUMOURS IN BRIEF

△ Level 9, the text adventure family, have just announced that their next product will be in a team-up with Ocean to produce a two-player action strategy game set in the Wild West. *Billy The Kid* will include all the usual clichés of the genre in true Cinemawaresque style. There are gunfights, train heists, bank robberies, card games and the obligatory bar room brawl. On the more original side, the game will also be able to be linked with another ST for two-way action, and will feature digitised sound effects and a MIDI music score. Bit of a departure from sweetly smiling gnomes!

△ As the Buyer's Guide jacks-in to the world of Cyberpunk, news was received this week that *Neuromancer*, the computer game, is being released on the Amiga in August. Based on the book that put the C in Cyberspace, it uses a graphical system with menus, that has now become so popular with the Lucasfilm games.

△ Sierra are the first to blab about their range of Autumn products, but in addition to those they are bringing out *Kings Quest IV* for the Amiga very shortly (it sez ere). Battle the forces of evil as Rosella in many quests all in full colour using Sierra's updated graphics system. *Colonel's Bequest* to follow v. soon too!

△ Rumours that *Dungeon Master* would be available for the 512k Amiga were dismissed this week by Mirrorsoft who said that though FTL have been approached by various parties saying that it could be done, no-one has yet proved that it can.

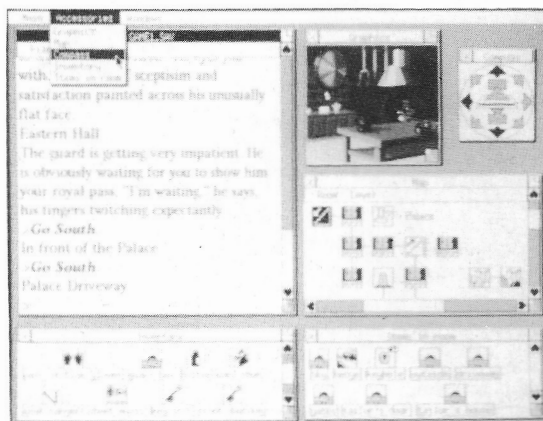
△ Cadaver update. Bitmap Bros. have set September for this necromantic piece of programming. Expect mega-hyping to follow...

**RUMOUR HAS IT THAT NEWS IS  
SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE!  
SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE...**



# a guided tour of *Wonderland*

Adventurers of the world: get ready to be spoilt rotten. Just when you all thought that the text adventure had died a death, Magnetic Scrolls have redesigned the whole genre in a fantastical romp through Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.



Their first game revamped the text adventure overnight with the advent of *The Pawn* - a formidable opening move in a game of chess that has spanned the last five years and a similar amount of titles - and of *Wonderland* it could be said that they have done it again. Yet here is a much larger milestone in the history of adventuring than ever *The Pawn* was. Here is an epic tale told in its true tradition, but twisted with Scroll's unique humour and a panache that takes the breath away.

## Brainstorming

Having spent a great deal of time hearing the praises of Magnetic Scrolls new brainstorm, my arrival to view the beast was shadowed under a cloud of scepticism. After all, it couldn't be THAT good and even if they did write *Myth* for us, I wasn't going to swallow my journalistic pride and gush if it was something of a white elephant. This decided, once I started playing it, I found myself being drawn into the classic tale like I had never read it before; it's strengths apparent from the moment the program whirs into action, both as a game and as a new adventuring interface. So what else could I do but offer the first complete and comprehensive guided tour around the game that will certainly be one of THE games of the nineties.

## Interfacing with Reality

The name Magnetic Scrolls came originally from the days of *The Pawn*, when those eye-catching graphics first appeared at the drag of a mouse, and when the whole game revolved around the fact that you could pull down a scroll-shaped menu to change the textsize. Things have changed a lot since then, and WIMP systems have become a lot more complex. WIMP stands, of course, for Windows,

Icons, Menus and Pointers, and all these are now implemented into the new system.

## Step right up!

Our tour starts with the windowing facilities, which makes up the backbone of *Wonderland*. Previously Scrolls have offered a pretty standard text input system with a few added extras for personality. Now the array of options is staggering. Whatever type of adventure you feel most comfortable with, *Wonderland* will cater for it. For a start, the game offers a text window that when turned on fills the whole screen with the usual format for adventures, with the obvious

added bonus that any text that scrolls off the top of the screen (plus a lot more besides) can be perused by using the slide bars at the side of the box. You can also decide which font you would like for the story text and your own input, plus some cutting and pasting tools that can be used to make up the input line. The game could be played exactly in this fashion, which will be a great relief to the text adventure die-hards, but the fun really starts when you begin to delve into the other options that Anita and the gang have in store for you.

## Iconography Unlimited

The next piece of the MW system is the on-screen mapping. No more fighting with a piece of squared A4 for three hours only to find that you started three inches to far to the left and you've fell off the edge of the page. Here the game maps everything as you progress, with every location having its own icon with a distinctive picture. Exits are all marked, and when the map goes up to a different level, the system creates another level of the window, which you can flip between. By clicking the mouse on any of the icons, you can bring up a menu that allows you to go to that location from wherever you are or bring up the graphic for that room. And you can size this under the text window and use the map as a way to move around, when you get bored of typing North and West.

## Geographical Genius

And while we're on the subject of movement, there is also a handy graphic of a compass which can be popped up whenever you want it. This has all the cardinal points on it plus up and down. Whichever location you happen to be standing in, the compass highlights



which visible directions you can go in - an adventurer's godsend if ever there was one.

### Inventive Inventories

Next comes the Inventory window, which shows icons of all the objects that you happen to be carrying with you on your travels through *Wonderland*. These each have their own distinctive graphic and can be clicked on to bring up a separate menu listing all the options that pertain to that object. The other box that is very closely linked to this one details all the items, other than scenery, in your current location. This includes movable and immovable objects, each again with their own menu. To illustrate this, if the object was a white apron then the menu would include such options as drop, wear or remove (whichever was relevant), examine and search, whereas if it were the menu for a chest, the wear/remove would be replaced for open/close.

### Life's Such a Drag!

With both these windows open, getting and dropping items is as easy as dragging the icon from one window to the other. Included in the items in the room are also a lot of important, but immovable, objects which are useful to solving the puzzles, such as doors, pianos and the like, and all the rest is considered useless scenery. With this system you are instantly aware what you can play about with in any location and what is best forgotten. Yet be careful; Magnetic Scrolls have a track record of hiding objects within other objects and *Wonderland* is no exception.

### Visual Van Goghs

And last, an unarguably the most impressive of all the boxes, is the graphics window. This allows you to see into the world of *Wonderland* and take a peek at the stunningly detailed views. But not only do the graphics stun, they also move with animation sequences that are textured, fast and extremely beautiful. Every location has its own graphical portrait and this can be called up at any time. Though not all of them are full screen, they are all incredibly detailed and incorporate some of the most original and desirable graphics ever to be produced on home computers - and then there's the



Detail from the Wonderland box cover artwork

animation. Not only does *Wonderland* look terrific, it also lives with some realistic, and often unusual, set pieces of Disney-esque animated quality. Water flows under the bridges that you cross. Caterpillars idly smoke their respective hookahs whilst drumming their tailend against their mushrooms. Frogs, obviously bored with spawning, deliver invitations to croquet matches right before your eyes. Here is the real essence of the atmosphere. Gone are the Tenniel black and white bookplate styles and in are the new *Wonderland* graphics, a colourful contrast to the pen and ink originals.

### Beautiful Movements

Speaking with Chris Kent, *Wonderland's* leading graphic artist and illustrator of a mere ninety-three of the hundred plus pictures, he explained the original concept when the mammoth task of drawing the world began. "Illustrating every location was the original idea that we were presented with, with the view to moving away from the Disney cartoon approach that most people associate with Alice and move toward a land that was more naturalistic. If we knew how much work

was involved, we would have had second thoughts. It was a daunting task." The graphics were inspired by a mix of sources, from the book, the game text and also copious amounts of research material of thatched cottages, Edwardian mansions and sprawling countryside. The idea was to make the world as believable as possible - and they have succeeded admirably. As soon as you see *Wonderland*, you'll want to live in it!

### At The Pictures

Chris also told me that the game pictures were also tackled in a different way to before. Gone are the static room scenes; in *Wonderland* they were looking at the scenes as if they were camera shots in a movie. So here they have long shots, zoom-ins and panoramas all interconnecting to form the graphical whole. Not only do you witness the quaintness of the White Rabbit's house viewed from the lane, you also get to see the ornate detail on the Queen of Hearts' bathtaps!

### Pièce De Résistance

Few adventures ever bother with a grand finale and the common 'You have won! Do you want to Quit or Restart (q/r)?' message is usually all that the programmer's can muster. Yet here the frustration of being left with a line of text as your only reward for slaving through the game for three months is wiped clean away with an end piece that will really surpass even the most elaborate fanfare. The game ends as does the book with the trial of the stolen tarts. The court sequence has taken three months just to get the graphics and animation ready - and that's just for two pictures! Each of the jury (which for those of you who don't know, consists of the entire pack of Diamonds, including King and Queen) is ready for you to present your evidence and fight for or against you. This alone is purported to be different for everyone playing the game, but the startling thing about the trial is that the cards actually stand up to give their speeches. They gesture, rant and grimace in the minutest detail and the whole effect is magnificent.

### Animation Elations

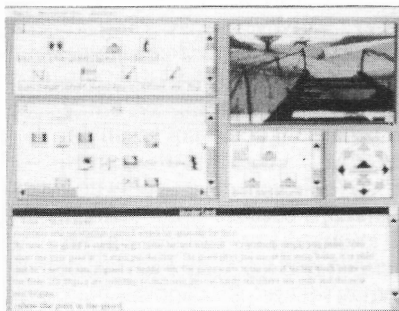
The animation is constructed in exact-



ly the same way as Disney or Bluth would do it, except instead of cellulose, the digital artist uses a blanked out part of the screen to move the graphic. In normal animation, everything that is to remain static is painted onto a single cell and placed over the background, whilst all movement is done on separate cells to avoid redrawing and repainting the whole picture everytime. On the screen the same system is used, but it is the static graphics that are unchanged while the part of the picture that moves is constantly updated in its own cycle. The end result is so impressive that we could easily spend a whole article on the graphics alone.

### Interactive Images

One last note about the graphics; every one has objects pictured in it that appear in the location's text, so if you wish to, by clicking the mouse, you can interact with those objects in exactly the same way as with the icons, making the pictures a working part of the game.



### Helpful Hints

After detailing the windows, the next thing that springs to your attention is that the game includes a complete on-line help facility. When called up from the main menu, it offers a tiered list of the problems within the game grouped by area. Selecting these, you home-in on a specific problem and unveil hints on that particular trouble-spot. This will then tell you everything from a gentle nudge to the full solution, all at the touch of a button. Now this is going to be the most controversial point in the game as there is nothing to stop the weak-willed emptying the entire puzzles of the game into their lap on the first exploration of *Wonderland*, though there is a built-in guilt factor. At various points in the game, such as when you bring up your score, the program tells you how many times you have used the cheat facility. A sobering thought, but will it be enough to stop you finishing the game in five minutes? At the end of this impressive list, it is almost too easy to

dismiss the fact that there is also a full soundtrack that accompanies each section of the game - all elementary really, but mention-worthy all the same.

### Featured Features

All these features are under your control, just turn on and off whatever you want on the screen, place the windows in whatever configuration and design your own game. Customise your own *Wonderland*.

### Adventurous Aspirations

The Magnetic Windows WIMP system is all very impressive, but you can't play around with the bells and whistles forever. After you've seen everything and spent hours arranging and rearranging the windows, you want to get on and actually play the game. So what's it like? Well, *Wonderland* is a big game. As soon as you pass the opening sequence, the game opens out onto a huge sprawling place with twisting pathways and numerous locations. Things are never what they seem and the favourite characters are all there waiting for you to interact with them - if you can. Most of them are completely mad.

### Role Modeling

Knowledge of the book is not needed, although if you have read it there is a constant warm feeling of déjà-vu that spreads through you as you progress through the game. Everything is so alien and yet so enticingly familiar - all the old favourites are there, but twisted slightly into new and stranger roles. Each of the areas of the adventure are arranged with as much text or graphics or icons as anyone could want and the whole together heralds a new genre of games.

### Redefinition Time

With the viewing that I had, *Wonderland* redefines the adventure game. It is not a text adventure, it is not a graphics adventure or even an icon-driven adventure - though with a little tweeking, it could be all three - and yes, it has editors and twiddly bits and just about everything. Fiddle with this, reorganise that. Turn everything on and off, by all means. But when all is said and done, *Wonderland* is a fantastic adventure on its own. If Magnetic Scrolls had put it out five years ago, it would have brushed *The Pawn* under the carpet, the parser is stronger, the text is crisper, the story is eternal and so apt to base puzzles around. Progress has been made and the system is just the exclamation mark.



### Dreamtime

The whole of the story takes place whilst Alice is dreaming by the riverbank on that now-famous hot and sunny afternoon, and this too is mirrored in the opening sequence of the game. So the worst that can happen to you within *Wonderland* is that you wake up. Whatever happens to you in the dream has a parallel in the real world. So for example, if you eat a cake that causes you to increase in size in a location with a low ceiling, you bash your head on the ceiling and awake to find that you have rolled over in your sleep and hit your head on a tree root. So the object is not to wake up!

### Spell Bindings

The way into *Wonderland* is a mini game which must be navigated before you can roam freely around the world in any direction you like. This follows the book quite closely, with some devious changes that at first disorients the Lewis Carroll fanatics amongst you. But once you are over this, you are held spellbound and I am sure that if I didn't have to, I would not have stopped playing until way after dark.

### Wake Up To *Wonderland*!

Which brings us to the end of our guided tour of Anita's new adventure. And to wrap it all up, what more can I say other than however sceptical I once was, I have been converted: *Wonderland* is a dream!

\* \* \* \*





They said that it couldn't be done. They said that there was no way to contact them. They said that the distances were just too far, that there was no telephone and that they kept all the doors locked. They said that it was impossible. But here at Confidential the impossible is an everyday occurrence and miracleworking is an expected job qualification. So after the Boss impressed this upon me at great length whilst hanging me out of the window by the earplugs of my Walkman, I jetted across to the Reuters Room for a transatlantic fax...

through the keyhole



faster than light



### John Knight (JK) talks to Wayne Holder (WH), President of FTL

JK: Where does FTL fit into the scheme of things, company-wise?

WH: FTL Games is a division of Software Heaven, Inc. However, we don't market products under that name. Before forming the games division about five years ago, Software Heaven programmed spelling and writing style checkers and sold them under that name Oasis Systems, which was the company name before we incorporated. We also licensed these products to many companies for several years to be build-into word processors. However, this type of business quickly got boring, so we now concentrate on games.

JK: Where did the concept of *Dungeon Master* come from?

WH: *Dungeon Master* was jointly conceived by Doug Bell, Andy Jarros, Wayne Holder, Dennis Walker, and Mike Newton.



JK: How did the original game evolve?

WH: Originally, we were trying to get out a new game quickly as a follow on to our success with *SunDog* for the ST. We thought that a role-playing game based on a dungeon scenario would be easy to do. However, it took us to years to complete *Dungeon Master*, because once we got into the design we realised that there was a lot of untapped potential in RPG's for computers.

JK: What was the biggest technical step in the evolution of *DM*?

WH: The biggest step was when we decided to make the game work in real time instead of using game turns. This introduced many complications.

JK: One of my favourite parts of the game were the realistic monsters. I've never jumped so many times whilst playing a game! Who designed them?

WH: Andy Jarros did all the graphic design for *Dungeon Master* and he and David Simon did the new monsters for *Chaos Strikes Back*.

JK: How did you design the monsters?

WH: We have a custom in-house 'Game CAD' system which does the game map layout, object placement, puzzle design, etc. and produces a database file which drives the propriety game 'engine' which is the major component of our games. Also, we've spent a lot of time creating custom tools for programming and graphic design. The Game CAD package we call DCS

(*Dungeon Construction Set*) because it was first created for making *Dungeon Master*. However, we're using it now in the design of several new games.

JK: Was there anything left out of *DM* because it could not be implemented?

WH: Not because we couldn't do it, but perhaps because we couldn't do it well enough. Lots of stuff was programmed and later removed because it just didn't feel right when we playtested it. Probably the game was written about three times over before we were satisfied.

JK: On the Atari ST version of *Dungeon Master*, how did you get everything on one disk?

WH: Many of our custom graphic tools are for specialised data compression. However, RAM memory is usually more precious than disk space because we like to minimise the number of time the game has to be read from the disk. Having the disk whirl and freeze the action at a really exciting point in the game is a bad design, we feel.

JK: Why did it take 1 Meg on the Amiga then?

WH: The original game engine was designed for the Atari ST. On the ST it is much easier to reclaim RAM from the system than on the Amiga. We could have made *Dungeon Master* fit on 512K, but it would have required us to virtually cannibalise the game. Actually, we tried for quite a few months to do just that, which is why



the Amiga release of *Dungeon Master* was delayed from the ST release. But, in the end we decided it just wouldn't have the quality we wanted. So, we reversed course and decided that since the Amiga would require 1 Meg we would try to add new features, such as the stereo sound and faster animation, to make the best use of the extra RAM.

JK: How is the dungeon data stored?  
WH: The dungeon data is extremely complicated and not easy to describe. The final format is created by a special compression tool directly from the Game CAD system.

JK: What would you like to improve on the system?  
WH: We have a large list of new features we want to phase in over the next several years. Here are some highlights: A new graphic technique to increase the variety and realism of the game graphics. In fact, you may see a small example of this in the Amiga version of *Chaos Strikes Back*, if it passes final playtesting: New game settings (outdoors, caverns, space stations, etc.), New interfaces to allow you to communicate with other creatures or other players in multiplayer games, CD-ROM based games with vast areas to explore.

JK: How far did you go with these ideas on *Chaos*?  
WH: *Chaos Strikes Back* was intended to be an 'expansion set' and not a new game, so we were restricted in several ways. *Chaos* uses the same game engine as *Dungeon Master*. The only new programming was in the Hint Oracle and the Champion Portrait Editor (programmed by Joe Linhoff).

JK: Why not a new idea instead?  
WH: *Chaos* was a shakedown run for the idea of creating a new scenario for an existing game using the Game CAD system. We wanted to see just what we could do without needing new programming for the engine, because the programming staff were pretty busy last year getting the game engine working on three Japanese PC's.

JK: What other new ideas have you for using the DM system?  
WH: The *Dungeon Master* game engine is the core of all the new games we're working on. However, since the engine is very flexible, you may not recognise it as *Dungeon Master* in some of the new games.

JK: How does the combat system work?  
WH: We tried to make the combat system more like a flight simulator and

less based on random numbers. This means that much detail is continually modelled by the game instead of simulated by dice rolls. For example, when you throw a dagger, the game models this as if it were a real projectile sailing through the air. When the dagger hits something it causes a certain amount of damage which is dependant upon how hard it was thrown (based on how strong the Champion throwing it was), how good a weapon it is, and many other factors.

JK: Which are the best weapons and how do statistics effect combat?  
WH: The following is a list of approximate rankings of most of the combat weapons, listed in order of increasing strength. Note that the options available sometimes have more of an effect than the strength of the weapon in determining the overall destructive power.

Weak weapons: Dagger (Ninja weapon), Wooden club

Average weapons: Falchion sword, Small mace, Sword, Rapier, Samurai sword, Mace of order (+5 strength), Stone club, Sabre

Superior weapons: Vorpall blade (Wizard weapon, +4), Mana (able to hit non-material beings), Axe, Bolt Blade (Lightning bolts), Delta sword (+1 Mana), Fury (Fireballs), Morning star

The amount of damage a champion can give with a weapon is also determined by the weight of the weapon in relation to the strength of the champion. For instance, the stone club, which weighs 11.0 KG is really too heavy for even the strongest champion to effectively wield, and a morning star (5.0 KG) requires a particularly strong champion (strength at least 65 to 70) to use a maximum effect. The probability of hitting a creature with a weapon depends on the champion's dexterity, the weapon option chosen, and the dexterity of the creature being



Russ Boelhauf and Wayne Holder of FTL attacked. Additionally, sometimes a player may hit a heavily armoured creature and inflict no damage. This is indistinguishable from missing the creature. Another factor which comes in to play is the champions stamina. When the stamina is below 50%, the champions effective strength with a weapon is reduced until, with stamina at zero, the champion has almost no chance of doing any damage.

JK: Why does it take so long for new games to appear?  
WH: Quality takes time. We want to create games that will be around for many years, not games that will be forgotten in six months.

Well I'm don't think that they've got anything to worry about in that department. We won't be forgetting *Dungeon Master* for a very long time!

### Faster Than Light are:

Doug Bell	Technical Director
Andy Jaros	Art And Game Design
David Simon	Art Design
Bill Kelly	Amiga Programming
Joe Linhoff	Atari Programming
Kirk Baker	Amiga/Macintosh Programming
Dan Hewitt	Atari/Macintosh Programming
Russ Boelhauf	Marketing Manager
Silvia Esposito	Wholesale Sales Supervisor
Debbie Nelson	Customer Relations
Kathy Merrill	Production Supervisor
Cindy Prince	Production Assistant
Wayne Holder	President



To compliment our look into the Home Adventure Market, J.T. has found that for every programmer who writes an adventure, only a few actually decide to publish themselves. In an ever-decreasing text/graphic adventure arena, most just gather dust in their creators natty disk boxes. Try as they might, adventure programmers filled with the excitement of using GAC, STAC or *The Quill* rush and finish their adventures only to find that their efforts are for naught. Once such entrepreneur is Richard Paynter, an enthusiastic adventurer with a finished game tucked securely beneath his belt, but with a narrowing future of its actual release.

Here we trace Richard's history and raise some pertinent questions about the future for ardent adventure writers in the ever-changing computer world. Will we ever play *Student Blues*, Richard's debut adventure? Will the text phoenix rise again? Probably not - so what should be done?



# PUZZLEBOX



Richard Paynter has been 'into' computers practically from the very start. Like most of the adventure crowd, he became interested in the world of computers after his parents decided that he would benefit from having a ZX81 as a present some long-forgotten Christmas past. The fascination was immediate and programming skills were soon developed. School life suffered marginally while his other hobbies, notably artwork and writing, fell by the wayside as his tentative steps began to quicken; his shuffling became a stride. A C64 followed the Spectrum, his BASIC programs became longer, larger and more complex, and over the next year he evolved from tinkering to machine code and the internals of the computer set-up. "It all sounded very complicated", he admitted, "until I read a book entitled *Scope*, which broke down all the misconceptions that I had. The myth of machine code was smashed."

Getting his hands dirty in the heart of his C64, Richard found that his growing talents were recognised by a small software team called Paranoid, whom he met through the local groups of hackers in Medway (ever heard of the Medway Boys? Nope? How about the Kent Team?) Paranoid were ini-

## A TALE OF THE TO-BE-EXPECTED

tially impressed with the scrolling routines that Richard had implemented in a shoot-'em-up called *Wildfire* (ooh, sounds like a good name to use somewhere...) He had been trying to write games for a while, and it was a welcome break to have an external influence with the possibility of a publishing deal. The resulting contract was for a shoot-'em-up for Paranoid's own brainchild, *Exodus*. So Richard's scrolling was added to their original graphics and game plan, and it was aired to the big, bad world.

Unfortunately, the big, bad world didn't like it, so Richard went back to the drawing board. This time he came up with *Worron*, a strange blend of strategy and maze elements which went through Codemasters hands, finally reaching Firebird's Colin Fuidge. Richard knew him from visiting Telecom, though it wasn't that he made a lasting physical impression. "The reason I knew Colin was through a twenty-four hour *Elite* competition that they were running. He remembered me mainly because it was me who won!" This time the contract did involve some money changing hands, yet the game disappeared into oblivion and never hit the shelves, becoming lost in the Telecom closure last year. "It was a frustrating time for me", he said, "but at least I have reacquired the rights since the change-over."

After generally undenting the software industry, Richard went off to study a degree course in Computer Science at Hatfield Polytechnic. His consuming interest with computers undiminished

over the years and even though his C64 was replaced by the gleaming Macintosh environment of the Poly, he chose an Atari ST for his next machine. In digs, he found himself living with a student called David Fox, who also owned an ST and, more importantly, a copy of *STAC*, the *ST Adventure Creator* from Incentive. With weekends and between lectures spare and with little money to paint Hatfield red every night, talk turned to writing an adventure based around the concept of a student's run-up to their final examinations: *Student Blues*.

At first, this idea seems to lack the creativity and excitement of the more usual swords and sorcery genre, yet as Richard began to explain, it became more and more enthralling; after all, when it comes down to it, this is essentially the plot of *The Young Ones*, and there is no way that anyone could ever call that dull and boring! "The initial concept did sound a little bland, but we soon spiced it up with a large amount of cheating, bribery, breaking and entering, blackmail and stealing from your friends." The usual run-of-the-mill everyday pastimes of your average student at college, it seems!

"It centres around you taking the role of a 1st Year student who has almost reached the end of his initial year, with the object of the game being to complete four courses which comprise the first year. The only problem is that you haven't done any of the work and just two days remain before everything must be handed in." Quite evil really, and difficult too. Richard assures me



that the problems are not easy, though on the programming side, working in familiar territory made implementation quite straight forward. "*Student Blues* was easier to write than most mainly because we were dealing with reality. Certain characters are tongue-in-cheek versions of actual people at the Poly, and the graphics for the adventure are real locations. Artist's licence allowed us to change things around." Probably to avoid libel suits.

The initial problem in the game is that of taking one of Richard's experiences and charactering it to fit the game ideas. It revolves around a guy called Paul, who lived with Richard and David in digs for a while. Paul, who was a pleasant bloke, only had two passions, football and tea which grew to be major obsessions and were prime material for the adventure. "Paul was a tea fanatic - really - he used to drink fifteen cups a day and usually while he was watching football on television. So we placed an object in his seat which you must obtain, and the only way to get him away from the TV is by brewing a cup of tea, although you have to get past the weird tea machine in the kitchen, which has undertones of certain scenes from *Hitchhikers*."

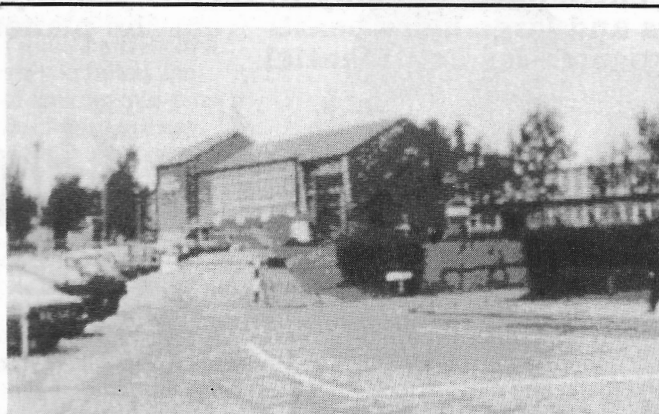
Further on in the game, you find yourself and the rest of your zany household in the local pub getting inebriated (not an altogether alien concept to students I'm sure). Though Richard assures me that you don't have to be a student to appreciate the humour - and in-jokes are kept to a minimum. Finishing the game is no wee undertaking. *Student Blues* is not a small game. Richard explains, "There are a lot of problems in the adventure and it is a very big game. There is over 550k of memory used and half of that is used for text alone." When I asked him how difficult he thought it, he replied "Harder than Infocom. This is not really a game for the beginner." The text was written mostly by Richard, as David's enthusiasm ran out after a few months. "The partnership was a nightmare and we were always working separately. Due to this we would use the same counters twice and the whole situation was a mess."

The graphics are digitised colour pictures that started their life as black and white photographs, taken by Richard with his home camera. And effective they are too, especially after they have been converted to full colour with a resident art package. His favourite picture was of the location called the Railway Track, and the hardest to shoot was the Quarry, mainly due to

the camera not picking up all the graduations of the sand. Though these have been included, Richard was very reluctant to include graphics in his game. "I only put them in as a commercial move, and even then made it so that you can easily turn them off. Graphics detract from your perception of where you are and also make the games more expensive - due mainly to memory. There is also the fact that graphics take up more disks and are costly in loading time. Still I suppose it's good that the people around Hatfield would probably recognise the local area from the photographs." Which, in my opinion, adds a certain depth and charm to the whole game. Obviously a signpost here for the CD future of adventures.

Once *Student Blues* was finished it was polished, tested and then packed off to Incentive, who were eager to see any games produced using STAC. A few months after the initial approach, Ian Andrew replied, saying he liked it a lot, was critical of a few parts (which at least proved that he had played the game), but said that they had other considerations and were not interested in marketing it. He also suggested graphics. That was in Autumn '89 and no further developments have occurred. Even with the graphics, Incentive were too involved with *Freescape*. So if anyone is interested in marketing a top-notch adventure for the ST, Richard can be contacted at the address in the Dead Letter Box.

So what is the future for Richard's game? In realistic terms, not much. Outlets for this sort of adventure can be counted on one hand and with the game being STAC'ed it would have



to be rewritten before any commercial operation would touch it. Richard's future should be a little brighter as he is nearing the finals of his Science course, though even after his disappointing experiences, he still loves adventures and wants to produce more. "I have a whole batch of new ideas, and the only thing that is keeping me back is that *Student Blues* got nowhere. The one that I have started working on is a very loose parody on *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, called *The Jam, the Genie and the Virus*, centering around a world inside a computer." This game is humorous and a big departure from a program called *Student Blues*. But with no market and approaching degrees, Richard looks set to funnel his talents into other, more lucrative, areas of the computer industry. Undaunted, he has decided to write his own adventure creator in his final year, which shows his commitment to the hobby even after it has managed few shouts of encouragement over the past years. We wish Richard the best of luck - he's certainly going to need it!





The centre-piece of many RPGs has, usually, been of organic origin. Wizards, Sorcerers and large hairy beasts from the planet Bong. But a candle? Paul Rigby investigates for Confidential.

# The Magic Candle

Based in Torrance California, Mindcraft is not dominated by pushy PR people and marketing men. Experienced games players run the company, design the games and make all the important decisions. Before programming *The Magic Candle*, they spent a long time asking RPG players what they wanted. From that research, *The Magic Candle* emerged. Is this game the RPG 'for the people'?

So who are Mindcraft? Ali Atabek: "Mindcraft started about two years ago, there were three of us at the time. Myself, Ugur Atabek (my wife) and James Thomas. We had developed one title before called *Rings of Zilfin*. It wasn't terribly successful. But successful enough to encourage us to try again."

So what is *TMC* actually about? Briefly, *TMC* itself imprisons a mighty demon, by the name of Dreax (never Bob or Kevin is it?). The flame actually holds him in place. However, the guardians of the candle have vanished and the candle has begun to melt. When the flame expires Dreax will be free to seek his revenge. Your party will have to roam the length and breadth of Deruvia to collect a range of objects and learn a variety of magical chants to prevent the catastrophe. All of this leads to one of the most elaborate and satisfying endings ever seen in a RPG. All I will say is that there is no killing and the endgame will include an involving sequence of events that you will need to accomplish before you finish. In the sequel, you will travel into the lands of the enemy. The plot surrounds the missing guardians who you will have to rescue. The title of the game will be called *The Magic Candle 2 - The Four and Forty*. The latter being the guardians. Graphics will be even better as Mindcraft have a new artist.

I asked Ali where the idea for *TMC* actually originated. "Oh, that's obscured by time, it's now been four years. Some of it's in the *Rings of Zilfin*. Anyone who has played *Zilfin* will recognise certain features that were present in both. Such as the

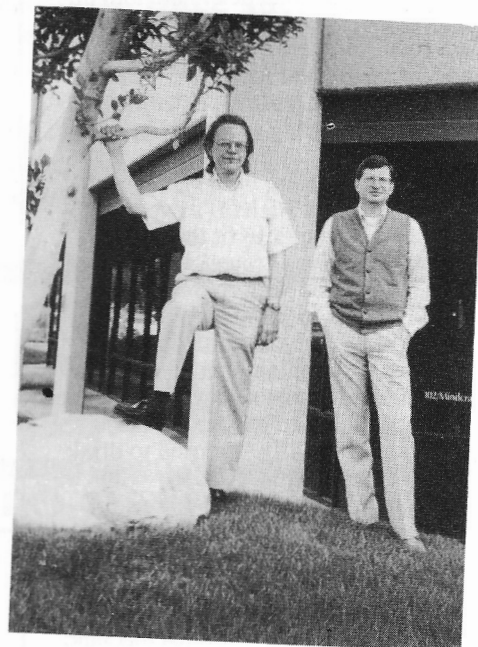
mushrooms. There were so many things I would have liked to have changed in *Zilfin*, but couldn't because the design was locked at the time. So when I had a chance to start all over we had *Magic Candle*."

*TMC* viewpoint is the classic *Ultima* type look-down. Why choose that viewpoint and not *The Bard's Tale* first-person arrangement? "That was a personal preference on my part. I've always enjoyed *Ultima* more than *Bard's*. Speaking of 'influences', I'm sure the influence of *Ultima* is there. That cannot be helped because *Ultima* is the classic, they did it first."

But now a pause for a little personal prejudice. If there is one aspect of RPGs that drives me up the dungeon wall, it's the game which relies on hack'n'slash as the main part of the 'plot'. Okay, there is room in the market for such games, SSI's *AD&D* series being a good example. Probably the only hack'n'slash type game with any quality about it.

However, the name of the game is 'role-playing' so you can understand my relief to play *TMC* which embodies all of the positive role-playing values, staying well clear of the hack'n'slash fraternity. But was this a conscious design ploy? "Absolutely. I wish there was a way to develop a RPG which doesn't have combat in it. But it's very difficult because without the combat it's very difficult to provide the tension and it won't sell. Combat has to be there but we intentionally and consciously try to downplay it's importance. Although we also tried to develop a comprehensive combat system. But we were careful not to make it the only feature in the games. We would like to proceed along those lines in our future games too."

Mindcraft have provided many elements that make combat only a part of the whole, rather than the dominant factor. The use of exploration, puzzles, the excellent character interface and a storyline. "...as we develop



NPCs and give them character, interfacing with them may become as important as combat itself. Instead of having combat every other second encounter.

Another aspect I was very impressed with was the monster generation. It is a plain fact that the majority of RPG designs provide a fictional routine. For example, you may kill every monster in a dungeon - but walk out and then back in and the dungeon is full again! It's about time this part of the RPG was re-appraised by software houses. In *TMC*, however, when you kill a monster it stays killed. "I realised that the randomness of monster generation was the biggest problem with RPGs at the time. Besides character development, you've got no sense of accomplishment. No matter how many you kill there is more to come. I realised that this wasn't giving the player enough satisfaction. It certainly wasn't giving any to me. In fact combat, after a while, became something I wanted to avoid. What's the point? They'll come back as soon as you've killed them."

The one problem Mindcraft found with this doctrine was that you might need to do combat to get gold, experience, etc. So they had to think of another method and decided to introduce a system where the monsters are refreshed



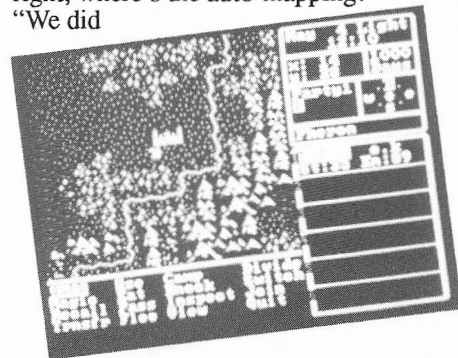
by periodical patrols. In effect, if you wipe out a band of monsters you will be able to wander the area without fear of attack, for three-four game months. The one exception is dungeons. Once they are killed - that's it. Why other companies don't emulate this system is beyond me.

When combat does arise you will find that the enemy are a pretty intelligent lot. Of course if you are faced with a bunch of thicko Orcs you won't see much in the way of tactics. But face a troop of magic users and fighters and you'll have a fight on your hands. They appear to realise who your weakest people are, single out your wizards as a priority kill, etc. "The thinking there is, well, if I was in their position what would I do? So each monster type gets an intelligence rating. The ideas of artificial intelligence are a lot more developed in *Magic Candle 2*."

Another refreshing aspect of *TMC* is that magic users are actually allowed to wear armour and carry substantial weapons. A real change from the normal game which has the wizard clad in a drafty cloak and a wimpish dagger to protect him when he's run out of spell points, or whatever. Why was that decision taken, was it sympathy for magic-users? (Laughing) In a way, I guess. If a wizard is willing to wear armour, why shouldn't he be able to? If they run out of spells what are they going to do? Wait to be zapped or cut down? Why can't they start swinging something? Clearly, they're not going to be good at it but at least they'll have a fighting chance."

Ever played an RPG and found a +50 magical sword cast from solid diamond by the Dwarf forges of Xorgu? Slices through stone like a knife through butter? You won't find too many of those in *TMC*. There are enhanced weapons but you will never find a powerful weapon randomly. In *TMC* there is one powerful item but only the hero can carry it and it is limited. Right, follow me down into the dungeons. Dark isn't it? Notice something, missing? Hmmm? Yes, that's right, where's the auto-mapping?

"We did

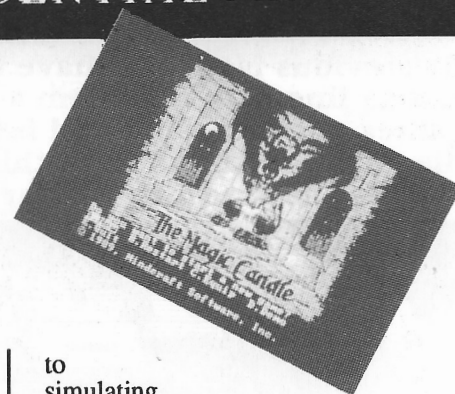


provide one mechanism which gives you an overall map of the dungeon. But you have to solve a puzzle first." Ali thought that if you follow the *Ultima* system of looking into gems it takes some of the challenge away. On the other hand, people are so used to auto-mapping they expect it. The *TMC* system was a compromise.

One of the major features of *TMC* is the option of splitting your party into several pieces. "I was thinking more of real life. Let's say that we're actually living this adventure. Here I am, and I've got my buddies and we arrive in town. What do we do? Certainly, we just wouldn't walk around, just going every place together. We would have different things to do or different assignments. The only way to do that is to split the party." There is one part late in the game where you will need to split your party into three pieces in order to solve a puzzle.

One minor criticism I had in the town, was that I could have done with more signs to tell me where things were situated. "Everybody's asking for it and you got it! It's going to be there in the sequel. It was too late to put it in *TMC* by the time we realised." Actually, we have touched upon Mindcraft's philosophy for the *TMC* series, and it will be a series. It will be a constant learning process, with each new game an improvement, not a clone. I did ask whether we would see, for example, a *Magic Candle 7* and Ali said we probably would. Although each game might not be called *Magic Candle*. It would be set in the same world, though.

You have to be careful what stance you take in certain areas. In towns, walk around with a head-crushing axe in your hand and people are not going to rush up to you with the welcome mat, are they? For the sequel Mindcraft have developed a form of auto-combat. What you do is to assign the leadership to one of your companions, so the orders come from them. However, that character's leadership style may vary greatly from a different character. Give the leadership to the halfling, for example and he might order a direct retreat as halflings are not so partial to combat! Also, give the leadership to a dwarf and he might forget everything else and order a suicidal attack on a group of Orcs. I enquired whether Mindcraft would take the subject even further. "Absolutely. They are unexplored areas which are awfully difficult to program. That is why it hasn't been explored as much as combat, for example, which is really down



to simulating dice and is no big deal. But in the new game, each player has a mood which changes depending upon external events. We'll also have attributes such as bravery, loyalty and so on." Moving onto interaction. This is handled well in *TMC*. Actually, you are not able to talk to people all the time. Well, a shopkeeper closes up and goes home at night doesn't he? Time is a dependency here. So how is this interaction developed? Are we looking at a complicated database of actions, reactions and so on?

"No, nothing like that really, I wish it was! It's pretty straightforward and very tedious. To simulate a real-world environment we said, 'Well, people just don't stand in the same square 24 hours a day, they should come and go'. A very interesting ability in the sequel, is the option to have a detailed conversation and to hear advice from your party. For example, if you are in a particular location, one of your party may have actually been there before so he can give you a few tips about possible enemies or traps".

Another noticeable feature of *TMC* is, at the beginning of a game, you recruit ready-made characters. There is no character creation, from scratch, routines here. The reason? Mindcraft are against rolling for characters and so make sure that every character you are 'offered' when you are forming your party, is unique in some way thus creating a more realistic and 'emotional' game. It is also possible that the sequel will allow friends to become your enemies under certain conditions and/or a traitor in the party. As you may have guessed, I am very impressed with *TMC*. In fact I rate it alongside the awesome *Ultima* series. I can give no better compliment than that. The emphasis on 'role-playing' rather than hack'n'slash is refreshing and should be encouraged. The graphics are excellent, the system is well designed and the role-playing elements are well utilised to create an enjoyable and addictive RPG that will be all the more enjoyable because of the magnificent end sequence.



In previous issues we have looked at a few games that you can play down a telephone line with a modem and computer. Regular readers will know that in these games you can meet and interact with them. Most Multi-User games have a Middle Earth setting, but in this issue we look at *Empyrion*, which is different from all the rest of the things so far covered in many other ways.

# MugScan

## by Pippin

CREATOR OF THE MIRRORWORLD UNIVERSE

*Empyrion* starts within the underwater city 'Centralis'. Many years before the game starts, the people of this underwater city to cope with a population surge above ground. Players live within 'Hages' controlled by high-level Hage-Administrators. Hage-Administrators are designated to build the Hages and have at their disposal large sums of money for this purpose. Hage administrators can be 'bumped off' just like any other official in power-bids.

The city has now lost contact with the outside world due to a catastrophic war with an alien force. Although the invaders wiped out the surface dwellers, the underwater city has remained thus far overlooked. Players can leave the city (in a way that they must discover for themselves) and once outside will find the planet in the grips of a superior alien presence. The city itself is a self-contained unit, simulating its own weather and regenerating its foods and essentials.

*Empyrion* provides users with a range of transport devices to move around the large environment. Vehicles in *Empyrion* come in several shapes and sizes. Smaller ones, like jet bikes or small single-person cars mean that the people see you drive in and out riding the jet bike. The larger ones are public services that can be used by many citizens simultaneously, allowing you to chat whilst travelling from one part of the city to another.

It is the only non-score based MUG currently on-line. Players progress by buying training in skills that help them survive (ie. Guncombat, Medic, Streetwise and Bribery). They are able, once outside the city to ply the space

ways and trade with far-off worlds. Although it should be noted that leaving the city is a crime.

Cash can be gained by trade. Objects may be gained by solving puzzles and you can spend your cash in various ways, buying equipment, vehicle, habitation, etc. If you want something special built for you then you apply to your Hage Administrator, who will look it over and possibly create it. If you get a house then construction in the game would appear natural. You will see NPC workmen moving around the site, etc. Construction will not happen until the person who commissioned it comes back into the game. Then he can watch the workmen building his house. Crime within the Centralis is a serious matter, dealt with by not only Hage officials but also by the Sandmen, which is a law enforcement body. They can impose heavy fines, brain wash (removal of skill) or even terminate wayward players.

The Eternals are a race of energy beings that dwelt on the sea-bed of this world long before man built the cities. Essentially they are the gamemasters. Eternals can move through space at will and can shape themselves into any form they choose. Within the city they play a low profile, observing mortals and encouraging their development preferring to mould citizens over a period of time rather than force any sudden change. The mortals who have met Eternals tend to treat them as gods and worship and prayer to Eternals is common within the city.

In *Empyrion*, practically everything is editable on-line by the gamemasters. There isn't much at all in the host that

makes it game-specific. This means it is very flexible on-line, and system messages, objects, rooms, etc. can all be altered at the drop of a hat (oh, and puzzles).

Objects can be manipulated to a high degree. Deep nesting of objects inside other objects. Objects being able to have other things ON them as well as IN them. Desks can have objects left on them or hidden in draws, for example.

'Examine desk.'

'The desk is made by craftsmen out of genuine wood (very rare in Centralis), and is ornately carved. An antique dating from, say, 1991. A book and a pen are sitting on the desk.'

'Examine drawer.'

'There is one large drawer in the desk. It is shut.'

'Open drawer.'

'It is locked shut.'

In *Empyrion* it is possible to reserve some objects for particular players. If you buy something then leave it in a safe place, it will be around for you when you next play.

Being a science-fiction system doesn't over restrict the storyline. In this game you can use magic via 'force-control' (as in Star Wars) Players are in *Empyrion* as a trial of their abilities, they are able to prove themselves. Magic is limited by psi level. If you expend it you have to take time to 'recharge'.

*Empyrion* is a fascinating new game that should have Sci-Fi buffs sitting on the edge of their chairs. It follows many of the principles that I described in the last issue of Confidential when I was talking about Multi-User player extensible games. In the few months that it has been on-line it has attracted a large following and there are now many people living in Centralis. If you enjoy Sci-Fi, plug your modem in and set it to 1200/75 baud 8 bit 1 stop bit no parity. This game is free to play all you need worry about is your phone bill.

*Empyrion* is in the Iowa system, which can be found on 0883 744044 and 0883 744164.

\* \* \* \*

STOP PRESS + + + IS THE WORLD READY FOR ANY MORE TEAM MEMBERS + + + STOP PRESS

# THE TEAM

**UPDATE III**

Any resemblance to O/S staff, either living or dead, is purely coincidental...

**Agent Innuendo**

Boss's spunky new PA. Her talents include: hanging around in dark rooms waiting for things to develop, over-exposure, satisfying our member's queries and continually amazing us with her creamy buns. Fave films are *Dick Tracey*, *Naked Gun* and *Plenty*. Giggles at the smallest things. Starts every day with a strong black pick-me-up\*.

**Agent Mystic Spiral**

Wistful Cancerian shaman and famed guru. Into Mongolian nose chanting, astrology and large floppy hats. Her cosmic quest for true planetary understanding has taken her out of her body, out of her mind and out of Putney. Often seen heading for the riverbank for a spot of faith healing and chips. Suffers sudden spasms of uncontrollable drifting.

STOP PRESS + + + IS THE WORLD READY FOR ANY MORE TEAM MEMBERS + + + STOP PRESS

Yes, it had to happen. Your favourite adventure magazine brings you an exclusive competition in association with:



# SIERRA

We've teamed up with Sierra and arranged this exclusive prize that no true adventurer will want to miss! Below are some questions based around the world-famous Sierra products. All you have to do is answer them to the best of your knowledge and send your answers to the address below before 10th September 1990. What could be easier?

1. Name *Leisure Suit Larry's* lover from the third product of the series?
2. *Police Quest* was written by an ex-police officer. True or False?
3. Who writes the famous *King's Quest* adventures?
4. Name the three adventurer classes in *Hero's Quest I*?
5. Who is the President of Sierra On-Line?

Please send all entries to:  
**Sierra On-Line Competition,**  
 Confidential, PO Box 847, Harlow, Essex,  
 CM21 9PH.

**NB:**

And don't forget to include details of which computer and disk size your winning games should be for!

**RULES**

CLOSING DATE FOR COMPETITION ENTRIES IS 10/8/90. NO EMPLOYEES OF INTER-MEDIATES LTD, ACTIVISION OR SIERRA-ON-LINE MAY ENTER. NO CASH ALTERNATIVE WILL BE OFFERED AND THE GAMES ARE AVAILABLE ON ALL 16-BIT FORMATS. THE EDITORS DECISION IS FINAL AND THE WINNER WILL BE NOTIFIED BY POST AFTER THE CLOSING DATE.

One lucky winner will receive the following prizes that have been kindly donated by Sierra and Activision:

\*  
 \* *Leisure Suit Larry* beach towel  
 \* Sierra-On-Line mug  
 \* *Leisure Suit Larry* T-Shirt  
 \* *Hero's Quest*  
 \* *Leisure Suit Larry 1*  
 \* *Manhunter San Francisco*  
 \* Codename Iceman

\* his name's Leroy.



# BATTLE

Greetings. Welcome to the second edition of Battleground. I have a number of games to review this time plus some answers to your letters. Talking about letters, if you have any questions to do with wargames (of any type) history, uniforms, weapons, etc. Just drop me a line. I may not have room for them in these pages but I promise to reply by post to all questions. The first two reviews are role-playing games, *The Sword of the Samurai*, and *Sword of Aragon*. Both of which have a large element of wargaming and as such can be played equally by devotees of both schools.

GEORGE LUNN.

++ BATTLEGROUNDS RECON +++ BATTLEGROUNDS RECON +++

## SWORD OF THE SAMURAI

This game comes from the publishers of *F19 Stealth Fighter*, *Red Storm Rising*, *Airborne Ranger* and *M1 Tank Platoon* to mention just a few. In the box you receive a 102-page manual, a technical supplement, a map and the all-important disks. In the case of the IBM, I was constantly changing these, but having said that it is really the only major problem with what I found to be an excellent and fascinating game.

And so to the game. You load up and are given a choice of full game or some of the elements (ie. a Duel, a Melee, or a Battle). I didn't see any advantage in doing anything other than play the full game as you get into the action almost immediately anyway. You are asked to give your character a name and don't make it too long as it appears on the map when you are travelling and takes up a lot of room.

You have to select a clan (or area) and it's best to be near OMI which you have to capture being an Imperial Headquarters, but unless you feel brave don't choose OMI itself as every other Daimyo (Warlord) is trying to

capture it too. The other choices you have to make are skill level, family advantages (ie. Honour (Status), Generalship Swordmanship and Land). I normally choose either Honour or Swordmanship (in case I get into a Duel). The game works essentially in three distinct sections.

### Section One

You have a home base from which you build up your armies, though be careful about giving land away as it could cost you troops. Get married early as this can cost you land as a dowry but also gives you children, the girl's you may be able to marry off in a political deal, and the boys become your heirs (this means you can continue playing should your original character be killed or have to commit Seppuku).

From your base you can also practice swordmanship, drill your armies and raise taxes. The next option is to travel either: (i) Alone. This allows you to fight bandits (either in paddy fields, villages or houses) and gain honour; (ii) In Disguise. You can still fight bandits, but you don't get any honour for it as people don't know who you are, but this option is mainly used to incite peasants to revolt by killing Tax Collectors, Take Hostages, Assassinations, Steal Items of value, which cause Samurai to lose Honour. Warning: if you get captured doing these things you will lose Honour, maybe some land and in the worst case be ordered to commit suicide; (iii) With your army. This lets you fight battles. Here is the only other problem I encountered with the game. I got into



the situation where I outnumbered the opposing army 5-1 which should have been an easy victory, but I tried to be clever and crush them with a pincer movement which resulted in my own forces being locked together with the enemy none of which could move.

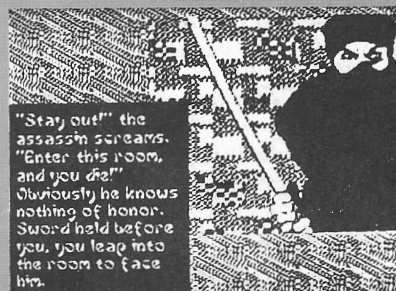
The only way out was to use the retreat option and as I was close to the edge of the playing area resulted in my troops leaving the battlefield (the rally option seldom works). Not only did I lose the battle, but also some Honour and the friendship of a Samurai I was trying to help. It is always better to fight and lose a battle rather than retreat. And if faced with superior numbers try to fight one wing at a time, you are more maneuverable than the computer forces. When faced with cavalry either use your own against them, or use your gunners, or if you have only infantry just fight and lose gracefully.

### Section Two

This is the same as the first section, except you are a more senior Samurai, things become harder and armies become larger. Be careful for the first few moves. One thing I neglected to mention is the Duel Option which is a One to One swordfight, which you can undertake against Assassins, Swordmasters and other Samurai. Use the practice option to build up your skill.

### Section Three

The last section consists of fighting for control of Japan. You have a map of Japan with your areas of control highlighted. You can still travel, but the main element is to conquer surrounding areas and build your power base up to the required 24 provinces, before declaring yourself Shogun. I hope you enjoy the game as much as I have. It's not too complicated and is very enjoyable.



"Stay out!" the assassin screams. "Enter this room, and you die!" Obviously he knows nothing of honor. Sword held before you, you leap into the room to face him.

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# GROUND

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## SWORD OF ARAGON



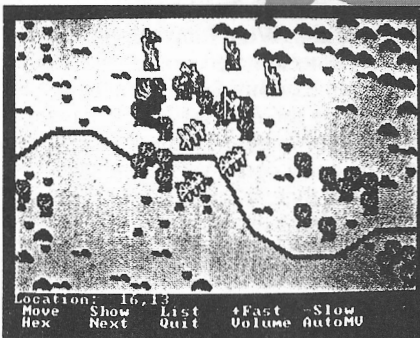
This is a fantasy game in which you play either a warrior, knight, ranger, priest or mage. I can't say there is any advantage in choosing one type over another as you get or can hire followers of the various types. Your character does have the advantage of starting at a higher level which means more spells and better abilities.

After selecting your character you build your army (the easy option for beginners is to accept the ready made standard army). From this point on you are into the game and can structure the turns as to how you feel works best. I found I needed a routine, like develop cities, then more armies, but you don't have to do things in a specific order.

The idea of the game is to build up your cities and armies, explore the land (a large area which is unchar-

tered) conquer and rule. There are a large number of random encounters and events which will require judgement and a lot of luck. So having built your armies be guided by rumours and then set out. I found the northwest area plus the unexplored area beyond the elves proved to be the most productive.

By winning battles and developing cities, your finances improve and you can conscript and equip more troops or re-equip your existing troops with better weapons. When I got into battles I found the best policy was to choose a defensive position, entrench my Infantry, supported by my archers and spell users. I think that gives you an idea of the game. I would be glad to hear from anyone who has the game to discuss tactics used. I found it absorbing and a great deal of fun.



## SECOND FRONT

'WARNING! this can be a very LONG game, the box says Playing Time 10 to 100 hours. I have managed to win in 5 hours with the skill level set on easy. I only managed to win by taking Leningrad and Moscow very early in the game.

The game itself is very much like a board game with counters representing units, Armoured and Infantry which have separate movement and fighting capabilities. The game is quite straightforward with you trying to maintain a line while pushing back the opposition and capturing cities that give you victory points. The choices of Scenario are Full Games starting in 1941 or 1942 or sections of the front ie. Moscow and Stalingrad

Some hints on play: (i) Use your Aircraft first on Enemy HQ's to destroy enemy aircraft, (ii) Stay within fighter cover, don't attack just with bombers, (iii) After HQ's use aircraft to soften up enemy forces where you intend to break through, (iv) Keep your HQ close BEHIND your front line this will give better 'control' while not exposing them to too much danger, (v) Tanks are very powerful and can break through, but be careful you don't get cut off, (vi) If you destroy enemy HQ's they do come back, but it shatters the front in the mean time, (vii) Keep a line and if possible some reserves as you won't see all the enemy reinforcements and it can come as a shock when they suddenly appear out of nowhere, (viii) Upgrading weapons is a good idea, if you last long enough to use them, (ix) Same old cry. Get into a routine so you don't lose track of what units you have moved and where they are going.

This is a good game, but I found that I couldn't save the game and never reached the end because of it. Has anyone out there any suggestions as to what I am doing wrong? Or why it won't save?

## WAR CORRESPONDENCE

John Kidd of South London writes asking about the game *Second Front*. He also makes the point that there is no mention of the Russian T34 Tank in the manual and asks if it is in the game?

I have written to John with a full reply to his letter which included other points not mentioned here, but for any of you interested I have done a review of the game, plus details of the T34 tank (one of the best in WWII) which IS included in the game, but not

detailed in the manual (which does mention the Grant, Lee and Sherman tanks which were on lend lease). I can only assume that the game was published pre-Perestroika and it is biased against the Russians tanks in favour of the American (unless the authors had an American Civil War fixation, of course).

I can recommend some books on Samurai's, the Russian Front and the Zulu Wars so keep those letters coming. See you next time.

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John Trevillian rides again to round-up the

# HOME ADVENTURE MARKET

Two issue's down and we still have a little way to go before we finish the current round-up of the world of amateur adventuring. This time we home-in on another batch of enthusiasts in the business just for the love of adventures. And if you are reading this article for the first time, you have missed quite a lot of very good companies, so we are extending a small service to anyone who doesn't happen to have Issue's Ten and Eleven. The full list of all the Home Adventure Companies is now available, giving details of information already published, plus all those still to be included in the next few Issues. To get this, see the end of this article for details.

## JON LEMMON

Compass Software, 111 Mill Road, Cobholm, Great Yarmouth, NR31 0RB.

An industrious adventure writer, Jon has managed to pen eight titles in his six years in the business. He started in 1984 and set up Compass Software with Tim Kemp, who unfortunately had to stop writing adventures due to ill health in 1986. Jon told me, "I started playing adventures on the VIC 20 cartridges and from that bought a Spectrum and the *Quill*. After Tim and I got stuck into the *Quill*, we wrote *Project-X The Microman* and then *The 'O' Zone*. At this stage, Tim stopped writing adventures and I started solo writing with *Demon From The Darkside*, which later grew into the *Demon* trilogy. After that I moved onto the PAW, but all the adventures are graphic and work on a Spectrum with 48k."

"When I switched to the PAW, I started to use the EXTERN command to add machine code sound FX and screen FX to my adventures. The first to

include these was *Intruder Alert* which got a great review in the february issue of Your Sinclair from Mike Gerrard.



A Dark Sky Over Paradise



He gave it 8/10 personal rating and 9/10 for value. I have always tried to keep the prices of my adventures down and to produce colour covers and give as much information to the player as possible. The game I am working on now is the second and final part of *Intruder Alert* called *Invaders From Planet-X*. This will include my new PIE system. And what is PIE? This stands for Player Interactive Externs. After I finished *Shadows Of The Past*, I decided that my adventures written on the PAW would be greatly enhanced with EXTERNS which could have an actual effect on the adventure you were playing. What I have done in *Invaders* is to write a small cursor-controlled game within the adventure called in via the PAW's EXTERN command. Later in the adventure, you enter the entry code system and you would find that you now have control over a group of three cells. Using the cursor keys you must build your cell body length to 50 by hitting random numbers that appear on the screen. Every time you hit a number, that number is added to your cell body. To stop this being easy, every time a number is hit five antibodies come up on the screen which you must not hit else the entry code would be broken and so on. The point I'm making is if you don't build up your cell length to 50, you would stay trapped in that location. If you do, PIE tells PAW and PAW will unlock a metal door allowing you to enter into an alien mother ship. This system which I have written opens up mega possibilities for future Compass adventures. I am also working on a new project called Digi Scan, which will, all going well, allow instant drawn graphics to appear within a PAW'ed adventure."

Due to the fact that Jon knew Phil Wade, who wrote the *Patch* and the



*Press* for Gilsoft, Compass were the first company using the *Quill* to have split screen graphic adventures and compressed text/graphic adventures. Though this advantage stopped when Phil sold his programs to Gilsoft. Compass also claims to be the first to have machine code screen FX and sound FX within a PAW'ed adventure.

"So now, with the PIE system added into the PAW, I should be able to be the first person to have a small arcade-type game within a PAW'ed adventure that will play a big part of the game you are playing. *Invaders From Planet-X* should be finished in April and again it will have a colour cover, full instructions and cost just £1.99, including postage and packing." And the reason they are only available on the Spectrum is because he has had little success on other formats. When he brought out *Demon From The Darkside* on the Commodore 64, he sold twelve!

The list includes the aforementioned *Project-X The Microman*, *The 'O' Zone (Microman II)* and *Demon From The Darkside*, followed by *The Golden Mask (Demon II)*, *The Devil's Hand (Demon III)*, *The Hobble Hunter*, *Intruder Alert* and *Shadows Of The Past*. All at £1.99. All for the Spectrum.

## MARTYN WESTWOOD

Interactive Technology, PO Box 146, Sheffield, S13 7TY.

Now this company is one that will soon be making the change from the home grown arena into the big boy's league. Martyn started adventure writing about four years ago, though he only started publishing his creations via Interactive Technology since

March last year. Yet even from his humble beginnings, the quality was high and their presentation has set them apart from the bulk of the lower-end market. Martyn explained, "Actually, a better name might be 'independent', as the quality of the software isn't, as the 'home-grown' title suggests, that low usually, and I'm sure the title puts a lot of people off."

He started with a Commodore 64/128 adventure, *The Dance of the Vampires* (£2.99) and *Dead End* - a Raymond Chandler-inspired detective story for the C64/128, Spectrum and ST (£5.95, £5.95 and £9.95 resp.). Both these got excellent reviews in CCI and CU, and after approaching the 'major' publishers, he decided to set up Interactive and go it on his own. Next came *A Dark Sky Over Paradise* (again for ST, C64/128 and Spectrum, at £4.99, £4.99 and £7.95 resp.), a science fiction tale set on a crisis-torn moon in the not-too-distant future. Also available is *Zeigeist*, an ST public domain sample disk. But what of the future?

"The new product is called *Weird Tales* which runs under a totally new system called Zen, the sophistication of which is comparable to the Infocom system. Indeed, when the game is released I'm sure comparisons between it and the old Infocom text-only games will be made." The game is made up of two stories, one by H.P. Lovecraft, and one by Seabury Quinn, both originally published in the 30's American pulp magazine of the same name. When this appears it will be full price and suitably impressive - Confidential will obviously bring you all the details in a further interview, so we won't linger on the details here, suffice to say that they can be obtained for the price of an SAE from the address above.

## STUART LORD

Sole Solution Software, 319  
London Road, High Wycombe,  
HP11 1EJ.

From one end of the market to the other, Stuart has a single graphic adventure available called *Border Harrier*, written using the *Quill*, *Illustrator*, *Press* and *Characters* for the 48k Spectrum. He began by purchasing the *Quill* three years ago and since then he has advertised in fanzines such as *Adventure Probe*, *Basic* and *Spellbreaker*. *Border Harrier* is set in the 16th Century, deep in the heart of Scotland. You are entrusted with a message to take from the King of England to the King of Scotland, but you

are betrayed and find yourself in rebel hands, and finally imprisoned in Galashiel's gaol. The game revolves around escaping from your forced imprisonment, to recover the message and find your way to Scotland's Bonnie King.

Details, as ever, are available from SSS for an SAE!

## TONY COLLINS

Pegasus Developments, 760  
Tyburn Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B24 9NX.

Tony began on the road to producing games on a semi-serious basis after Pegasus's first game *The Hermitage* was reviewed in Your Sinclair and as a result sold over two hundred copies. Now there are five titles, but *The Hermitage* still stands out as a notable success. It centres around your mission, as a monk of the Middle Ages, to go on a pilgrimage to seek out and destroy an evil man, whom the Archbishop believes to be an incantation of Old Nick himself. The title comes from the place you are bound for, as the man lives as a hermit in the mountains and it is to his home that you travel. Yet your path is not simple, for you are tormented by an uneasy mind and you will have to overcome many tests of faith and strength that will assail your path. *Hermitage* is available as a text-only adventure on the 48k Spectrum for £1.99 or £2.99 on the 128k, and also a graphic version on the Spectrum +3 (£4.99).

Pegasus also have a detective story with satanic overtones with *Methyhel - The Spawn of Satan* (Text adventure with graphics on all three formats as *Hermitage*), a Greek quest with *The-seus and the Minotaur* (only Spectrum 48k - £1.99), *Teacher Trouble* (again only Spectrum 48k - £1.99) - an 'aliens invade school' story with its own warped humour and *The Games* (which come in two parts, but I have no information about those at the time of going to press).

All of the games are adequately produced and documented, with the usual bells and whistles on the parser and some neat developments using a real-time system.

All-in-all another little outlet that will be a good addition to your Spectrum collection.



## WALTER POOLEY

Flat 1, 46 Exeter Road, Bootle,  
Liverpool, L20 7BL.

Walter's first computer was the ill-supported Dragon 32, which he bought in the early 80's. This led him to buy a game called *Black Sanctum* which turned out to be an adventure and opened up a whole new world of adventuring for him. Only two titles are available, but the first is a compilation of four adventures all on one tape. For £5.00 you get: *Mansion Quest* (locate the mansion, find the treasure and claim your inheritance), *Desert island* (run aground on a desert island when your launch runs out of fuel, find the fuel to get off the island), *Castle Adventure* (rescue the princess, sounds easy, but look out for the surprise ending) and *Mission X* (you are transported to a strange alien planet, all you have to do is return home any way you can).

The other tape just has a single larger adventure on it called *Pyramid* (locate the pyramid, find the entrance, locate the treasure, make good your escape) for £2.00. All the games are available through the mail (post and packing is included) from the address above.

Walter adds, "All the adventures are presented in a legible white character set on a blue background with items of interest highlighted in colour, and you're left in no doubt what is a treasure. Inputs are of the no-nonsense verb/noun variety, with the usual abbreviations for directions, redescribe, quit, etc. With such varied storylines there should be something for everyone here - or maybe, like me, you will enjoy them all."

**Well that brings us to a close on this editions home adventurers. Next Issue we will be dealing with a few more of the small fry who form the lifeline for desperate text buffs everywhere!**



A recent trip to Reading through the spotlight on the many new titles by one of the largest computer software developers in the computer world, Sierra On-Line. PR Director Kirk Green held a conference with fifteen UK journalists present, giving them first hand information using video and slide equipment, showing the software that can be run on the new CD-ROM as well as titles from Dynamix, Sierra's newly acquired label. Of course, we were there hiding at the back, and uncovered future titles, new projects and an exclusive interview with the man himself...

## C O N F I D E N T I A L T A L K S T O

## KIRK

For anyone who doesn't know, when was the company first established?

The company began around 1980. Basically, it sounded like a fairy tale kind of idea. On the kitchen table in southern California, Roberta Williams had bought an Apple II micro computer system and she had always had ideas for a game and was seen in a game called the *Original Adventure Game* which was a text adventure. Roberta thought it was great but she thought she could do stories and add graphics to it. Her husband was a mainframe programmer at the time, so he did the programming, she did the story and the artwork and it came out as *Mystery House* which was Sierra's first game. And from there it just started off, one right after another, and our first 3D animated adventure was *Kings Quest 1* and from there things just went sky high. We still do get some people who ask for *Mystery House*, but that game has now been released into the public domain.

Did your previous job involve public relations work?

I worked with the television and radio doing public relations and I was also a presenter for a local radio station in California.

How did you become involved in the PR side of Sierra?

Actually, Ken Williams who is the President, asked me if I would like to come for an interview as someone had recommended me to him. I had graduated from Journalism school and he came up to me and asked if I would like to join the company. I had thought about doing some work in that field, which is why I went to Journalism school and did a degree, so yes, that was my plan to do that. I had thought about the aspects but had no idea that I would end up in entertainment software, it's quite exciting really.



Kirk Green with Rachel Gauntlett (PR for Sierra and Activision)

Before you began work at Sierra, were you involved in any kind of role-playing or adventures?

No, not at all. I never really got the chance to do anything like that, so I don't know if I would enjoy it or not.

Do you enjoy all the aspects of your work?

Yes. It's a lot of fun and I meet a lot of very interesting people who love our games so it makes my job a little easier because the company name speaks for me before I have to say anything.

What would you choose as your favourite Sierra adventure?

Boy, if I say one game more than the other, some designer is going to be angry. So I'll just say I like them all.

Do you have an all-time favourite game outside the Sierra range?

My favourite game outside of Sierra is Microprose's *F15* or Electronic Arts's *Indianapolis 500*. I like flight simula-

## GREEN

tors a lot, but I like adventures all the same.

How does the demand for the US adventure game market differ from that in England?

To tell the truth, I don't know the market that well in England or in the USA. I think that the demand for adventure games in the US is not inadequate and it continues to climb. I think that it depends on which computer. We do them for the IBM initially which is what we develop for. We like to think of our games, not as 'games', but as Interactive Films and I think that, seeing the new games, the demand will go up more in the future.

Is there a high demand for educational software in the US?

Sierra has decided on doing a lot more educational software and over the next years we will become much more involved in this.

Do you think that the *Leisure Suit Larry* series, which includes some adult scenes, have singled out the younger generation of adventurers?

No, because *Leisure Suit Larry* caters for people above a certain age of about 20 years old. It makes a change to have a game that adults can play on their own that is so much fun to do. The *Space Quest* and *Kings Quest* series appeal to the younger generation so we cater for people of all ages.

Is there a plan for *Leisure Suit Larry 4*?

*Leisure Suit Larry 4* should be out in the Spring of 1991. We are also planning a cartoon or film, but nothing is finalised as of yet.

If a film was written, who would you like to see playing the parts of Larry and Patti?

Dudley More sounds to me like he would make a good *Leisure Suit Larry*. For *Passionate Patti*, maybe Kim

Bassigner would play the part well.

**In my opinion, the box artwork for your products is excellent. Do you think this helps sell the games or is it because of your reputation?**

I think the first thing that sells the game is the Sierra logo. The name goes before everything else. I think that if it's a Sierra game, they'll buy it. Secondly the artwork. It has to be just the right look so as when you walk down the shop aisle you will see it and it will catch your eye. That's very important.

**What do you think on the introduction of the Sierra hint book range? Do you think that it has affected the player's enjoyment?**

I think it make the player's enjoy the game so much more because they have the hints available if they want help. It's their choice to either look at the book or not. It's just there as a reference to help in awkward situations.

**Do you think that in the future you will move away from adventures to other game aspects, or is the adventure front likely to continue?**

Sierra will always produce adventure games. They will always produce a high quality adventure game like interactive movies or electronic stories. We will never go away from what we know will sell best and what our customers like to play. We won't forget what we know we do best and we won't forget the people who helped us become where we are now.

**How do you see the progress of Sierra On-Line in the year 2000?**

I say that we are going to be bigger than Warner Brothers, no, that sounds terrible. I say that by the year 2000, computer entertainment will be alongside of television and motion pictures and books and there will be a moving in different mediums. I think the introduction of the CD ROM will give us the latitude to do the things that we've always wanted to do. With the CD ROM, who knows how far further we will be able to go?

**Do you think that with CD-ROM will be too expensive?**

We wouldn't move completely from the normal disk because we know that it will be a little more expensive. I'm saying that for the people with CD ROM's, they will have the advantage as more functions can be added to the full extent of what we are capable of. When it becomes a lower price, everyone will have one. Sierra On-Line is still to grow!

## HOT OFF THE PRESSES!

# SIERRA'S AUTUMN RANGE

CONFIDENTIAL SPILLS THE BEANS ON THE NEW GAMES COMING THIS FALL

### KEEPING UP WITH JONES

This is one 'real-life' adventure you won't forget in a hurry. Using a point-and-click interface, you have to 'keep up with the Jones' by getting a decent job to buy food, pay the bills and do all those things that happen in every day life. You can play with up to three other opponents to achieve your goal in life. You can visit new locations and hold conversations with characters who actually talk to you in a non-computer language. This will be the first Sierra game written for the 256 colour VGA and is due for release on the IBM PC computer with the Amiga, Atari ST and Macintosh to follow.

### HERO'S QUEST II : TRIAL BY FIRE

Back in the second of a series of four titles, you bring your earlier character into this new setting in the burning deserts of Arabia. Enter into a new experience in role-playing using the new SCI-high resolution graphics, the original smooth scrolling animation that you would expect from a cartoon film, and complex character interaction. Designed by Lori Cole, the creator of *Hero's Quest I*, a new level of combat has been added to bring the playability to a higher level of excitement. First released for the IBM PC, other computer formats will follow shortly after.

### KING'S QUEST V

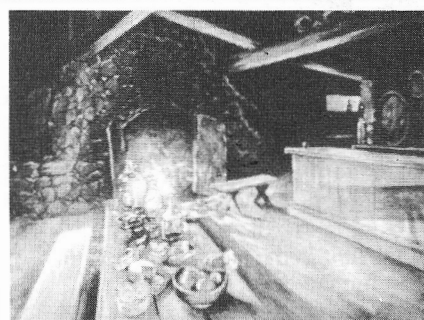
This is due to hit the computer world by storm towards the end of the year. Forget their usual graphics, Sierra have gone a step further to use the new Cinemagraphic technology and sophisticated Hollywood animation techniques. This is more like a movie to watch. The saga continues as you take the part as King Graham once again to participate in a whole new drama. When the CD-ROM takes its shape in the buying market, the game will contain over 10 megabytes of game data which will make *King's Quest V* the largest game in computer history to hold hours of digitized soundtrack music. Released on the IBM PC first, with others formats to follow. Don't miss it, it may be the last in this thrilling series!

### SPACE QUEST IV

Do you have a soft spot for humour in adventure games? If so, then the fourth in the series of quests from the award winning team is for you! You (Roger), have spent many months travelling through time and space, on your way back home to the planet Xenon to be re-united with your love and begin a new life. But, as usual, life is never as simple as that and the Sequel Police stand between you and freedom. The game features 256 colour VGA graphics and the usual scrolling screens. Versions will be available for the IBM PC formats first with the Amiga, Atari ST and the Macintosh versions to follow.

### RISE OF THE DRAGON

You are a 21st Century private-eye detective, roaming the city streets to uncover the most deadly crime's committed. You explore a real-time environment using a click-and-point interface which involves no typing. You encounter puzzles that need solving, encounter battles in arcade sequences. The product of Dynamix's new Game Development System, Dragon combines animation, interaction, problem-solving and Dynamix's VCR interface - all in 256 colour VGA!





Strange, but true; that's me! Your diminutive friend is back again for the penultimate quotient of our little quixotical correspondence course (please pardon my alliteration, I'm just excited after watching several videoed repeats of *The Good Old Days*). We have tackled quite a few topics in our time on these pages the last few issues and now we are moving onto the finals bits 'n' bobs. These concern the harder parts of beginning at adventures with some classic clues for some classic quests. Having been eavesdropping on the Adventure Helpline after a fashion for the last few nights, I know just what everyone is getting stuck on (Don't I, Mr. Wilson... and the less said about that the better). So it's off with the sneakers, on with the mortar board and out with the matchless, maniacal monologue that you have all come to love or live with for the past six months. At least I don't have to smuggle myself in anymore; someone's fitted a cat flap...

## W I Z A R D W H E E Z E ' S

# NOVICE ADVENTURER'S SCHOOL

### A COURSE IN THE BASICS OF COMPUTER ADVENTURING

#### Introducing...

Back in the days of classic adventures, like *Classic Adventure* for a start, the world of the adventurer was a much simpler place. Every solution to every problem was only a two-word command away, every room a two-line description and every object too useful to drop. Programmers were programmers and not internationally famous authors or master storytellers, and their plots and concepts all revolved around the fact that they knew that whatever they decided to include, however weird or wonderful, they would eventually have to program it! Such things scared the living daylight out of programmers and it wasn't until the

advent of the adventure connoisseur that demanded the alteration of the ground rules. At first, problems revolved around objects (ie. keys to open doors, swords to kill monsters, spells to solve any of the more ambitious problems which couldn't be completed with a key or a sword). The next step involved bringing in more unusual devices to numb the brains of intrepid heroes and heroines like yourselves.

#### Indecipherable Cyphers

Scrawling anything from archaic parchments to spaceship toilet seats, simple (and not so simple) word puzzles baffle everyone at some time or another. The text adventure has always been the favourite testing

ground for all sorts of warped conundrums based around the use of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Mostly these are connected with common sense in a big way, and where they are not logical, there is usually a strong hint in the game as to how to work out the code, or is heavily involved with some sort of external copy protection - normally found in

the game packaging. So eyes front and let's take a look at some of the possible ways that you can be foiled in your hunt for the perfect score.

#### Crafty Codes

Transposing letters of the alphabet is the commonest form of code, especially in regular leaps. This usually means that you move the start of the alphabet up the scale by a few letters and write the new positions below the original letters. Thus, if we moved all the letters along by five, we would have:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ  
VWXYZABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTU  
(Where A=V, B=X, C=X, etc.)

In this way, it is just a matter of trial and error before the correct decoding is found. Other codes are not so easy. In the original *King's Quest*, for example, you are asked to guess a gnome's name. Now you may instantly connect the fairy tale theme of the game with the tale of Rumpelstiltskin, but it may take you some time to work out the coding for the name - a sentence of complete gobbledygook. Another similar coding style is of using hieroglyphics or an alternative character set to spell out alien alphabets, yet these are usually decodable from clues set



up within the game structure (as in the case of the Infocom Egyptian adventure, *Infidel*).

### Wretched Riddles

Rule 1: Riddles are really rank. Rule 2: Rank riddles rile relentlessly. Rule 3: For 'relentless riling' read 'riddles'. From these basic rules, you may begin to work out that I do not much care for riddles in any shape or form, mainly because if you cannot answer them you are stuck. Limboed. Kaputt. Up the creek without a paddle. Completely and utterly stymied! This aside, I have a great fondness for riddles (that I can answer) and take a certain amount of pride working them out. Usually, they can be fun (as in *The Hobbit*). Occasionally they can be found out (as in the on-line clues in *Zork Zero*). Mostly they are fiendish (I still cannot work out two of them in *Ooze* and have now given up all hope of ever discovering what exactly has 'a hat but no head, a foot but no shoe') The best approach with riddles is to make a list of everything you have tried and add all the possibilities that you can think of in a separate column. This will aid your memory when coming back to the game after a time and having to recall just which words you have already used. Trying singular words is best and remember, the word will have to be recognised by the parser, so this is a good test for newly thought-of answers.

### Riddle-Me-Ree

The answer of a true riddle is usually hinted at in the game text or at least not a million miles away from the subject matter. In *The Bard's Tale* series, adventurers are always getting stuck with the constant barrage of magic mouths that spout riddles so fast, you would think that they were going out of fashion. Yet these are easier than people think; lofty ideas of answers invariably collapse leaving the obvious behind. Try everything and if it's in the dictionary, don't discount it. Whoever thought up the riddle, 'Speak the word to pass by' should be shot as, to me, the required answer of 'Pass' is completely moronic. Still, it is a masochist's life we lead.

### Annoying Anagrams

Just a note to say that you'd better watch out for these little programmer's foibles too, as they have crept up in quite a few places over the years. They can best be spotted by garbled sentences or ill-fitting words on a screwed up piece of papyrus. I am getting a little ratty to day about all these plays on words, but that's only

because I have never worked out until today just how to go about decyphering them all - and having been up half the night trying to catch out the imp in *Ooze*, I am essentially peeved with the whole thing.

### A Soothing Note

Settling back in my chair, I will pass swiftly onto a less touchy subject: Death. Oh don't squirm, Miranda Richardson, we've all got to face up to it eventually. The problem with adventuring is that death seems to be just around every corner. If the game designer does their job properly it should be. That fear of dying should be ever present, yet not manifest itself too much. Instant death in adventures is something that can ruin an otherwise excellent product and detract from the storyline itself. The player should fear death, not be confronted by it at every turn. Walking a tight-rope of terror is fun. Walking into deathtraps is not. Yet games do appear where picking up certain seemingly harmless objects results in all manner of explosions, implosions and other less pyrotechnical happenings (eg. a trapdoor opens and you fall down a pit).

### The Meaning Of Death

Good adventures should give you a subtle warning either when the situation or object is first encountered or just before the onset of total death. Take, for example, an encounter with an axe-wielding troll who guards the entrance to the dungeon. In a good adventure, if you try to get past the troll, a message will appear to the effect that 'The troll guards the passage and hefts his axe in warning as you try to push past him'. This gives you the chance to parley, offer bribes or rise to the attack, perhaps if you tried it again, combat and death would result (after all the troll is nine feet taller than you and very mean). A bad adventure will sassily inform you that 'You try unsuccessfully to push past the troll, who then grabs you by the throat and casually lops your head off'. All good clean subtle stuff. Once you have identified which games kill you first

and ask questions later, you can alter your style of play to suit; saving the adventure at numerous points and just before attempting anything even the remotest bit risky is always a safe bet. Some of the newer adventures also have the addition of an UNDO command, which skips you back to the moment before your last input, which is handy.

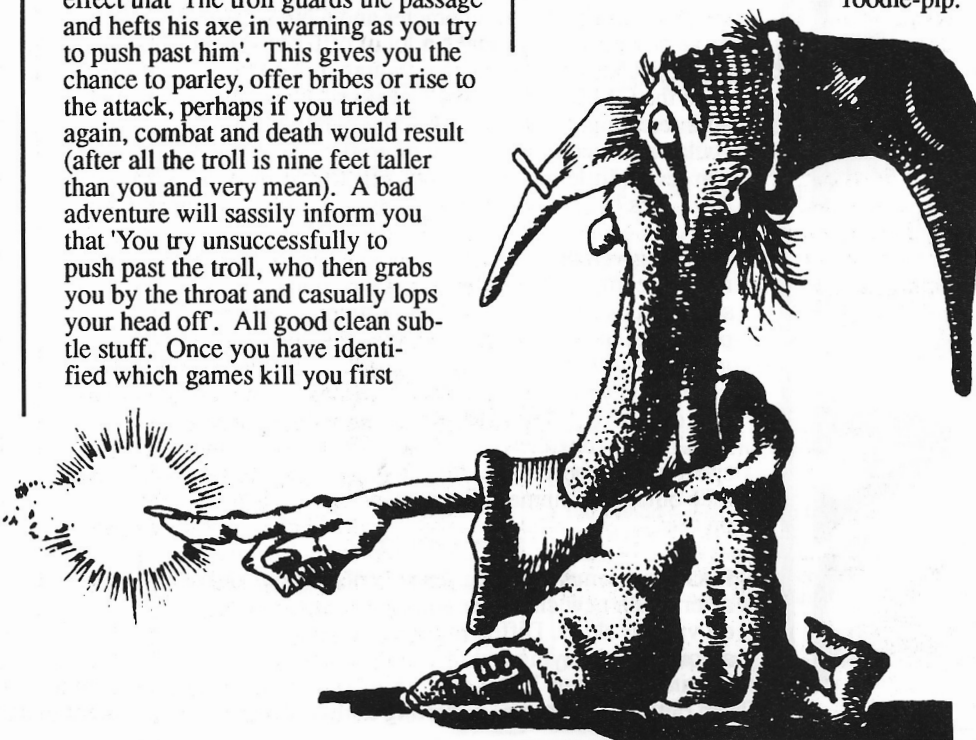
### Practical Studies

To finish this lesson, I would like to direct you towards which adventures you should be progressing onto. In the first instalment of the course, I did hint at what you could expect from each game company, and which games you should consider being Introductory level. Now though you can be moving onto more ambitious projects. Yet running down the latest catalogue price list does little to determine what each adventure is or even which one is an adventure! As a final summary in the last lesson next issue (number thirteen no less!), I will be listing all the current games in the catalogue, if they are easy or hard and relevant information like that. Having had postbags full of please for some sort of comprehensive list, I could hardly ignore them.

### Goodbye-e, goodbye-e

This will hopefully allow me to pack my sacks and toddle off into the wild blue yonder of total obscurity, knowing that I leave behind a class of top-notch, mega-doddy adventurers and adventuresses. Back for the last part in the next ish!

Toodle-pip.





# BATTLEGROUND

by K. Trebell.

**Mivreen, a once peaceful haven in a dangerous universe, untouched by war. But from afar, this nirvana had been watched by jealous eyes and eventually the unthinkable happened...**

Civilisation lay in ruins. A civilisation that took years to build was destroyed in 20 milliseconds. As people became hysterical economies collapsed, who would work when this may be their last hour? A solution had to be found and fast! At last a solution was found - the control war! This would only affect the small group of people taking part. Each planet would send a group of champions to an arena where they would battle until only one group remained. The planet that this group represented would be the winner and the losers would have to accept this or be destroyed by all the other planets. This may not be a perfect solution, but it was the only one available. The battle was to be on Mivreen (an obvious choice) and would be adjudicated by the ancient order of Arden from the planet Earth. And so the stage is set ready for a war to occur, the time has come. Three planets arguing over who would rule a strategically important planet. At last the battle ground would be put to the test.

*Battleground* is a fast-paced hand-moderated, science fiction role-playing game. When creating a character you must decide which race you wish to represent. There are three races to choose from and your choice will be influenced by what kind of society you would like to live in; The Leumeutic Federation, a democratic race with a very high technology level and a very high standard of living. The Empire of Pirra, a very highly cultured race ruled by a corrupt Emperor. And the Garde Alliance, a warlike race that has a very good administration and produces great tacticians. Having chosen a race, you now get down to the nitty-gritty of the character generation process. Firstly the basics of the character must be defined. Name, weight, hair colour, age, sex, complexion and eye colour. Next you are asked to give a written physical description of your character and a background. This will not make a lot of difference in how the character turns out although it does influence the GM in some ways. I always like to have an interesting character with some twists in his background as it makes play more fun because you can reveal little bits about your self to others as time goes by.

Having given the character a background this may now be complimented by giving the character some ethics and interests. This is more to help the player get more involved with the character. Having dealt with the more creative side of character generation you must now deal with statistic allocation over five different statistics strength, agility, intelligence, dexterity and the optional statistic of species. For species you may give your character a race other than human if you spend fifteen points on this.

Finally you must allocate some skills to your character. Each new character has 80 points to spend on various skills. Different skills cost different amounts and buying a skill will then give you a starting ability of 10 for each skill bought until you run out of skill points. A starting ability of 10

means that you have a 10% chance of using this skill successfully when it is required, this may be increased when playing the game. There are lots of different skills available and should be relevant to particular character.

Having created the character, it is time to get down to the fun part - playing the game.

*Battleground* lies within the more structured genre of PBM games and statistics play an important role in the game. The game is played in the standard method of sending in a turn sheet and getting back a return sheet with the result of your actions told as a story, but with this game there are a few extras. There is also an equipment sheet and skill sheet sent between player and GM. And you may receive a hand-drawn map of your current location.

The turn sheet has at the top your various statistics for the current time. At the top of the sheet your health is given, the number of weight points, the amount of experience points you have amassed, how many rations of food you have and how much money you have. This is split up into various levels of currency, these are Mongos, Demongs and Rals, being the local currency and allows you to buy items in the villages of Mivreen. The sheet also gives the amount of victory points your team has. Victory points are given to you for achievements such as killing an opponent and a team with the most victory points wins the war. Pev tokens are given with victory points and you may buy items with them in two special shops in the battle ground.

As I have said, the turn sheet gives you all the statistical information to tell you how your character is at the current time. This will be influenced by the last return. You now write your instructions on this turn sheet and state if you wish to have a map drawn for you. The skill sheet that you have lists what skills you have and what ability you have for each. After your initial ability of 10 having bought a skill and can work this up to 100% experience points. One hundredth of the experience points awarded are allocated as skill points so if you get 1000 experience points you are given 10 skill points. You may improve current skills with these or save them up and buy a new skill. The final sheet is an equipment list. This merely lists each piece of equipment you are carrying and how much it weighs. I have mentioned victory points. These are a very important aspect of the game. You should try and get as many as possible so that your team have the most. If the battle goes on too long the adjudicators may call a points victory. If that were to happen the team with the most points would win.

Ultimately you want to win this war. It is worth mentioning that there are three ways to do it. The first is to kill all the other two teams players, the second is to win on victory points and the last is to capture a place called Fort Apache, a special element to add more fun to the game.

From the very start this game is very fast paced and exciting. On my very first turn I was dropped into an exciting situation with one of the local inhabitants. A couple of turns later and I scored my first victory over a fierce opponent called the Wraith. This left me very battered but I had a chance to heal before I was again involved in a battle, this time with the local police. What makes the game all the more fun is that within the villages the use of high tech. weapons is forbidden and you must fight with standard weaponry. It is also illegal to kill locals. Something that does cause a problem is that when you leave a town you may only have old fashioned weapons and you could be faced by another more high tech opponent, that's when it gets hard. High tech weapons can be bought in two special shops. The reason that locals hate technology is because it killed nearly all of their race; understandable really.

You can see that for me violence played a large part in the way the game progressed, but this was only because I made it that way - my character loved fighting. Although there is always some violence in this type of game, some people may choose to avoid it by being more of a thinker and plotting against people.

Something that also makes this game great is the amount player interaction. You quickly meet team mates and you must interact and set up alliances and plot against rival teams etc. You could be a loner if you wished but this would make things a lot harder. The game is also very unpredictable. Just when you think you've got it worked out, a plot twist comes to the surface and everything starts to go wrong. An example would be that I at first wasted my time protecting a girl who made me attack a future ally. Eventually I found out that I was being used to capture one of my own team mates and ended up having to fight against this girl. A lot had gone on in between and I had no idea I was being chased. It all adds to the fun of the game, you cannot escape a situation that easily in this game.

For me *Battleground* is a breath of fresh air. It is one of the few games that manages to be really good fun and remain very serious underneath the surface. If a player wished they could play this game from a serious point of view and really try to push the game hard for information or you could at other times just follow along with a party, let other people do the thinking and get yourself in all kinds of trouble - it is a lot of fun.



As far as game play goes I really can't criticise this game, I literally never had the chance to sit back and get bored of it, the action comes thick and fast and for me that is just great. The one criticism that I have is a point I have made about other games, the rule book for the game looks rather amateurish. There is hardly any art work and this makes it look less attractive. Apart from this I would strongly recommend *Battleground* to any sci-fi fans or anyone who just wants some fun.

I would say that this rates as a very good game for experienced PBM players looking for something a bit different and would be great for a new player looking for an entrance into the dark world of play by mail.

### BATTLEGROUND - THE GAME

The player's character is a battle-minded ex-pirate called Zubrich. Here Zubrich has finally got a chance to fight the feared Wraith. He has just knocked the Wraith out and is closing in for the kill when a man aims a crossbow at him from the roof and demands that he move back. Zubrich's reaction is to pretend to comply but then leap forward to finish the Wraith.

### GM'S REPLY

You give the appearance of complying with the Pirran commands yet all the time you are forming a desperate resolve, you are determined not to let your prey escape with his life, he has lost and deserves to die. Cautiously you change your grip upon your sword, and draw it up slightly. You watch the Pirran all the time waiting for a moment when his concentration may lapse, you flex your knees and crouch slightly. His attention is suddenly drawn to something in the crowd, you waste no time, but make your dive. With an almighty yell and a curse, you hurl yourself across the ring, driving your sword at the Wraith's heart.

Here Zubrich gets knocked off course by a boulder and only manages to drive his sword into the Wraith's side. Surprised that he has not been hit he looks up to see the Pirran on the roof being attacked by his friend Mallgus Hellhound. For a while all hell breaks loose and he has trouble getting to the Wraith, but finally he finds a chance.

You advance upon the Wraith once more. He has regained consciousness but looks dazed and stunned. He picks up the sword and tries to parry your blow with it. With a clash of steel you knock the sword from his hand. You look for the last time upon his living form, and then drive the sword into his beating heart. His body constricts in pain, he groans and then falls back dead. His eyes are open and quickly glazing. You withdraw your weapon from his body, and wipe it upon his cloak, which lies nearby. You rip his mask from his stiffening form. His face is thin and white, his bones stand out. His face is neither ugly nor handsome, it is just ordinary.

Having won this battle Zubrich and friends regroup and are rewarded for their efforts with Pev tokens and victory points.

## BATTLEGROUND facts

MODERATION:

HUMAN

SETTING:

SCIENCE FICTION

TOPIC:

POWER GAME

DIFFICULTY:

65%

START UP:

£4.20 + 2 FREE TURNS

ADDRESS:

JAMCO  
345 WARLEY ROAD  
N/S BLACKPOOL  
LANCASTER  
FY OST



To long-term readers of Confidential, the name Ian Urquhart will pump fear into the bladders of each and every one of you. His endless stream of letters, crossword entries and constructive criticism has splashed across the pages of this illustrious mag since Day One. In an effort to appease his voracious desire to get things printed, we have succumbed to publish his latest latent illiteracy into our very own Confidential Papers file. Please like it and send all fan mail to Ian Urquhart, c/o The Asylum, 2 Megalomaniac's Court, Swindon X...

# the wayfarers inn

BY IAN URQUHART

The Wayfarer's Inn is an establishment of some repute. Baroque in style, it lies on the Great North Road just north of Father Praxis' Chapel of rest (and massage parlour). The Inns "ever open door and ever roaring hearth invite both the weary traveller and bold adventurer alike to enter in and partake of the finest ales and spirits this side of heaven!" (or so the advertisement says). To those who have savoured the delights of the house ales, however, this description is slightly less cheery. The ales have been so watered down over the years, the recipe being lost in some dim and distant past, that there is as much chance of being saved from the effects of hyperspace travel from its alcohol content as there is of surviving the landlords' wrath should he ever hear you say so!

"Cuddly Kevin, the warm and friendly landlord" is another of the poets mis-justices of the advert. "Cuddly Kevin" is actually a seven foot tall troll with some of the most repulsive warts you have ever seen (unless, that is, you happen to have met the witches of South Ruislip, whose warts are legendary). Some of the misguided souls who, in the heat of the moment, have actually tried to cuddle Kevin now line the walls of the drinking house as a grim reminder to why Kevin was once called (once, very briefly called) 'The face which dredged a thousand ships'. Along with Kevin, the other regulars in the Wayfarer's Inn include Miranda,

the obligatory buxom serving wench, who, with a heart of gold and a naive innocence, is willing to supply you with your every need (at the discretion of "Cuddly Kevin"). The advert calls Miranda "A picture of loveliness and feminine delicacy" and, apart from the fact that not many delicate females can carry two full barrels of beer without breaking into a heavy glow, this is one of the truer statements in the ad. A cynic may propose that Miranda is employed solely to prevent the clientele from discovering that the ale tastes like badly fermented ditchwater, but then those few misguided people obviously do not know the pleasure that the tight fitting, low necked blouses can bring. Leave it just to be said that Miranda's lithe figure has been the subject of many a late night debate. Leaving the pleasant subject of Miranda behind (Miranda's behind?), the "band of cheery locals, who greet you with wild delight" generally consists of a miserable old man who sits in a cloud of despair in one of the less draughty areas of the bar.

In front of him, as a ritual incitement to charity, is nearly always an empty glass. On occasions, when the moon is right (or, more frequently, when the clink of coins has been heard from the pocket, pouch or handbag of some unwary traveller), the old man has been known to go into paroxysms of wild ramblings, muttering about a vast hoarde of treasure which awaits the hand of a charitable adventurer.

Once his thirst has been sated, the man will procede to spin the tales of treasure that old men in taverns have a habit of spinning. Sometimes, when the man is in a particularly generous frame of mind, these stories will be true, if a trifle warped.

After a particularly fine bout of drinking with a Warrior Knight of some standing, the old man described the ritual that would be necessary to win both a hoarde of treasure, and the hand of a ravishing princess. To do so, the old man convinced the knight to go to the cave of a local fierce dragon (as opposed that is to the local friendly dragon!), taking a cow and as much pig's blood that could be carried, and cry out, whilst standing in a bowl of cold custard, "I've bought the food and drink, so where are the girls?" The dragon, so astonished at being treated in such a familiar fashion, ate the cow, drank the blood, and began to salivate at the sight of the young and handsome knight.

As it happened, things turned out quite well, the knight got both the treasure, and the princess, but the indignities he had to suffer as the husband of Hrooga, dragon princess of Fern, were quite dreadful. In case you're wondering, the cold custard was an embellishment on the part of the old man, who, in spite of appearances, has a very particular brand of humour. Another inhabitant of this unhealthy, but prosperous establishment is the

A CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS  
SHORT STORY

cook... well, perhaps cook is too strong a word for it. Perhaps 'witch' would be more apt. However, if you can stand the slight tang of sulphur coated bats wings, then "the exquisite local delicacies" are for you. If these sulphurous dishes do not tickle your palette, then there is more conventional fare.

A popular dish is the "Adventurer's Special" which consists of a freshly baked chunk of stale, wholemeal bread prepared that very day by the cook, a lump of cheese ripe enough to chase mice (and catch them!) the whole thing garnished with a sprig of wolfsbane draped artistically over the side of the plate. Nobody's entirely sure how the cook manages to prepare freshly baked stale bread, but it is one of those examples of the tavern giving its customers what they seem to want! For some reason the "Adventurer's special" (priced at a hefty gold piece) sells far better than the intriguingly named 'Farmer's Supper' (currently priced at a comfortable copper piece), which consists of piping hot fresh bread baked to perfection with a slice of creamy cheese whose delicious flavour defies the description it deserves!

The old man is not the only "friendly local" that the bar supports. From time to time, when the hint of mystery sweeps heavily across the land like syrup poured generously over a steamed pudding, a cloaking and hooded figure shuffles listlessly into the bar and seats itself by the fire, raising its heavy cloak slightly to warm its hooves by the "ever roaring hearth".

The locals with their usual imaginative flair have named this creature 'The cloaked and hooded one', but various odd individuals that 'pop in' from time to time (leaving an odd trace of brimstone as they saunter, amble and clomp past the other inhabitants of the bar) have been heard to refer to the creature as 'B.L.', 'Hob', and 'The Dark Lord, evil ruler of the nether regions whose diabolical existence makes this place a better world'. There was one particular individual who, on being ousted from the warm seat by the fire, called this apparition of mysticism 'Slimebreath', but at the flick of some indeterminate region of the cloak, this particular individual became a particularly individual toad. However, with the aid of a failing ventriloquist, and the deep baritone voice that he had been blessed with, he soon made a name for himself on the amateur variety circuit.

Hob, however, is not the only magic



user to frequent the tavern. Praxis, the owner of the local Chapel of rest (with adjoining massage parlour), is also a student of the arcane arts. He is a florid, rumbustious man whose cheery bluster and persistent banter has driven many a weary traveller insane with rage. Among Praxis' many weaknesses is the taste he has acquired for Kevins home-made Damsion wine (purported to be the only drink to come with a health warning on every bottle).

Praxis has been a member of the community for many years, and is quite settled in his priestly role, but in the past (before the Watcher watched and when Seth the traitor still sat in judgement over the Labyrinths of doom) Praxis enjoyed the reputation of a wordly and powerful Mage. Why then is he the owner of a Chapel of Rest (with annexed therapy)? Well, aside from the drink which has affected his already vague memory, the main reason for his demotion could perhaps easily be explained by the 'nick-name' attributed to him during the later years of his career... 'Fumbleguts'.

The final denizen of the Wayfarer's Inn (who could be considered regular and worthy of note) is Kanis, a female guide with a linking for leather, whips, boots, restraining manacles and feather dusters. She has achieved the rank of

Major in the Guild of Guides (locally known as the 'Guild Guides') and is ready to be hired out to any team of adventurers that have the capital to afford her well paid, and well sought after services. There is however one small disadvantage to Major Kanis, for whilst being a charming, if slightly bondage obsession member of any party, in all other respects, Kanis is a bit of a dog.

Due to an unfortunate altercation with a charmed glade, whilst she was taking her finals in 'Magic woods and how to circumnavigate them.' She was enchanted into a crossbreed alsation/golden retriever, leading to a rapid growth in body hair, a fascination for trees and shrubs and an 'A+' in 'Nasty niffs and potent pongs: a sojourn into the world of smells'. In addition to her increased proficiency in the 'Guild Guides', one other side affect of this enchantment was the addition to Kanis' wardrobe of a stylish and fashionable collection of leather dog-collars.

These, then are 'the locals', and, along with the assorted gnomes, elves, trolls, ogres, dwarves, dragons, orcs and other assorted miscellaneous creatures of the adventure fraternity, they form the basis of many a happy and healthy nights recreation (and some would say over recreation). Happy Drinking!



# BIG RON'S

## CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

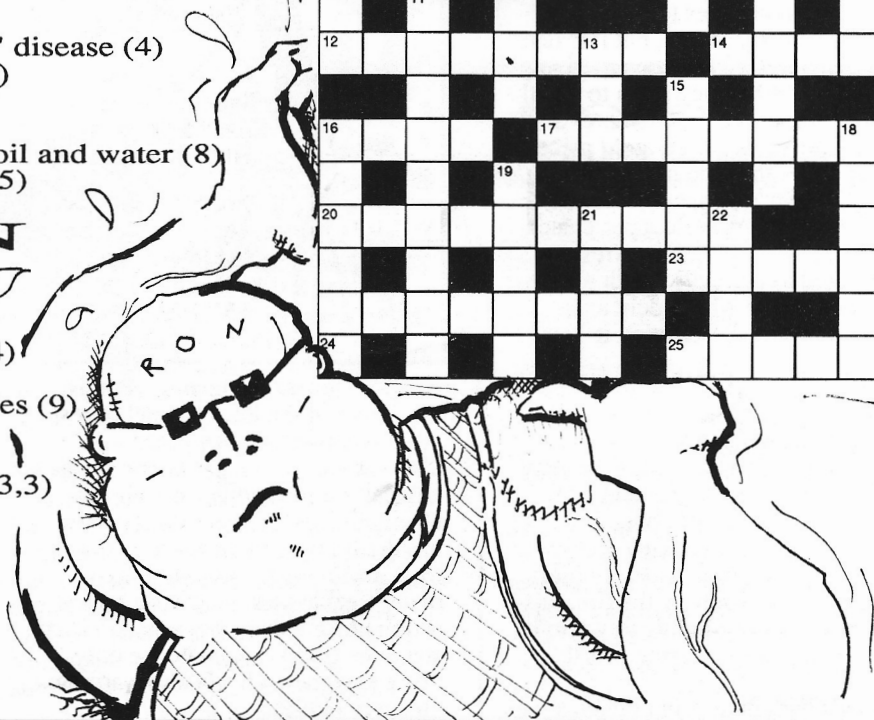
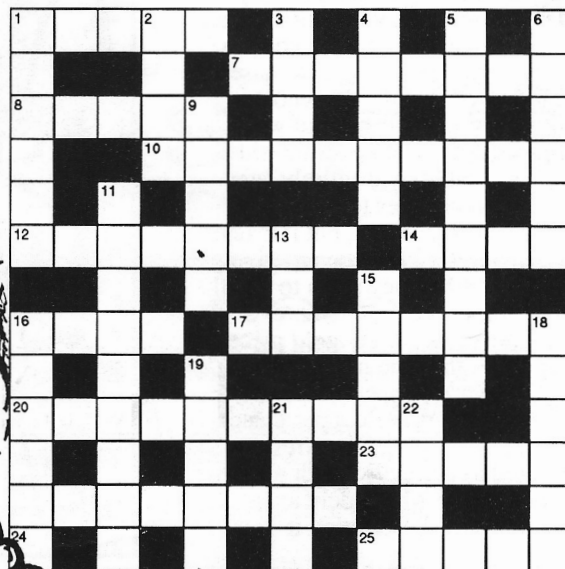
Hello. Big Ron here. Get your crayons out and have a bash at this little beauty of a Crossword. I got such a triffic response from the last one, that I thought I'd have another bash this time. A funny shaped one next time... Keep 'em peeled!

### ACROSS

1. Burial chamber (5)
7. Intestinal parasite (8)
8. From Berne, say (5)
10. Wrestling hold (10)
12. One who makes good (8)
14. Mark on skin (4)
16. Trees affected by "Dutch" disease (4)
17. Small wind instrument (8)
20. Decorative (10)
23. Hurriedness (5)
24. Homogenous mixture of oil and water (8)
25. George .....; Jazz singer (5)

### DOWN

1. Wheel on chair (6)
2. Shove (4)
3. Agricultural workplace (4)
4. Lachrymatory water (5)
5. Presidential line of vehicles (9)
6. One who inhales (6)
9. One who invests (6)
11. One who doesn't fit in (3,3,3)
13. Night before (3)
15. Biblical whale food? (5)
16. Worn away (6)
18. Cure (6)
19. Break (5)
21. Midday (4)
22. Tardy (4)



## ANAGRAMS & ANTIGRAMS

### TASTY TREATS FROM TOM O'TOOLE

This puzzle is set up in two parts; one anagrams, the other antigrams. Solve either set correctly to win a prize! Instructions next to each section.

### ANAGRAMS

Each of these anagrams explains or describes the word from which it is made. For example "voices rant on" is an appropriate anagram of "conversation". Similarly, "mystics in a heap", is an apt re-organisation of the letters in "metaphysicians". Try the phrases below. The answer in each of the cases is a single word.

- A 1 A rope ends it  
2 Our men earn it  
3 Nine thumps  
4 Sea term
- B 1 Heat's thrones  
2 Endless ambition  
3 Sir, am I not pretense?  
4 Apt is the cure
- C 1 Made sure  
2 Court posers  
3 Unrealisms, trap us  
4 Tender names

- 5 A stew, sir?  
6 Restore plush  
7 Let's rush  
8 Often sheds tears

- 5 Greed's sad end  
6 Is not solaced  
7 Life's aim  
8 Negroes get aid

- 5 Problems in Chinese  
6 Seen as mist  
7 We sting  
8 An evil soul's sin

## ANTIGRAMS

Antigrams are anagrams in which the letters of a word are re-organised to form a word or phrase meaning the *opposite* of the original. "Evangelists", for example, can become "evil's agents" and so forth. Solve the antigrams below and once more the answer in each of the cases is a single word.

A 1 I limit arms  
2 It's more fun  
3 Is it legal  
4 Fine tonic

B 1 Nice to imports  
2 Untied  
3 Restful  
4 Aim to condemn

C 1 Flags? No, no  
2 Tear no veils  
3 Martial  
4 Considerate

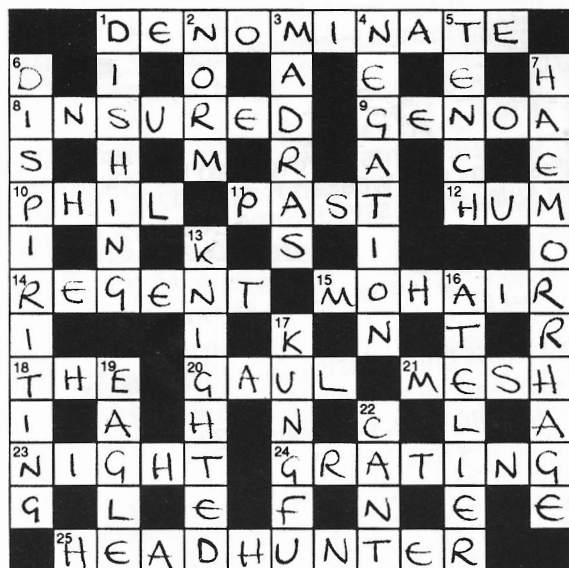
5 Ill-fed  
6 Archsaints  
7 No7 Nice love  
8 Real fun

5 Are advisers  
6 Casual  
7 Care is noted  
8 Is no credit

5 More tiny  
6 Bon, amiable  
7 Satan

PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES!

## LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS



The winners of the Big Ron's Puny Crossword (Issue Eleven) were: D. True of Cockermouth, Stephen Chesterman of Birmingham, J. Dodds of Bournemouth, G Crosthwaite and Tony Martin of Peterborough.

The Bedtime Story prompted another good response and the first five pulled out of the attaché case were: Matthew Lockheart of West Sussex, Neil Shipman of Bristol, Mrs. J. Birley of Gwynedd, Andrew Phang of (Oh he didn't put it down!) and David Campbell of Victoria, Australia! The answers are in **BOLD CAPITALS**: Once upon a time, long ago, when the world was younger than it is now, there lived a man named **ARTHUR** in a little cottage between two **HILLS**, **FAR** away in a magical country know as **KENT**. **I'LL** Answer your questions about Kent in a while, but suffice to say that Arthur

was very happy. He lived with his **CAT**, **LANDO** and his dog, **JINX**. **TER**rible

though it was, one day Arthur awoke and found he was suffering from **AMNESIA**! He couldn't remember anything; not even the names of his pets was a **MYSTERY**. "IS **LANDO** the dog?" he thought, watching his pets run around in the **SUN**. "DOG!" he called, "What is your name?" And all that Jinx could do was say, "WooF". "IS

Harry your name?" he enquired, suspecting already that he had got it wrong. But to his words, all Jinx did was give him his **PAW**. "Now this is getting me nowhere" he thought, so he set out to find someone who knew him and who could help him out. So he **JOURNEYED** down to the **STATION**, **FALLING** only once in the winter **SNOW**. **BALLING** his eyes out, he drew the attention of an old woman all dressed in yellow, who seeing him **STRANDED**, helped him to his feet. "Thank you", he said, "You are the **KINDEST**!" "IN Your whole life you will never meet anyone kinder", cackled the woman, "For I am know as the Helpful Yellow Witch, Good**STAR**". **CROSSING** the street with her, Arthur was taken through her yellow gate, up her yellow path and through her **YELLOW DOORWAY** into her house (which was also yellow). They talked for a

long time about **Doltmoon**, her frog, and other things until they saw the rising of the **MOON**. **MISTY**-eyed, Goodstar nearly wept when Arthur

told her about his amnesia. "Well", she said, "If I can create the **ULTIMATE MYTHICAL** creatures, **SUSPEND EDWARDIAN** ladies in the air and **ENCHANT ER**rant knights to fall in love with me, I can see no reason why I cannot get your memory back." So she created a slimey **OOZEY** goop in her **BLACK CAULDRON**, made up of a **JADE STONE** and a pinch of **IMAGINATION** and hey presto! Arthur was cured! As he left, she told him to always pop in even if it was just for **FUN**. "INVITE **Doltmoon** and yourself to my house one day", said Arthur in theyellow clothes that he had **BORROWED**. "TIME and time again, I promise, as you are my **WITNESS**!" said Goodstar. And when he got home, his pets were there to meet him and they were all happy again. "Wow", said Arthur, "What a great **ADVENTURE**!" **LANDO** and Jinx just smiled to each other and ran off into the garden to play.

The End.

### THIS ISSUE'S PRIZES

Big Ron's Cryptic Crossword: For the first five entries pulled out of his raincoat's pockets after the 15th September, we are giving away money-off vouchers from any Special Reserve products, which are redeemable on absolutely anything in our catalogue.

Anagrams & Antigrams gets five prizes of money-off vouchers too. Good luck!

PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES!



DROP →

**DEAD LETTER BOX****Ultima V I**

We are now playing *Ultima 6* and intend providing a telephone helpline for fellow fanatics. Anyone with information, problems, hints, etc., please phone evenings or weekends.

0222-569115 or 0642-781073.

Can help with *Ultimas I-V* and *Wizardry I-V*.  
If writing, please enclose large s.a.e.

**PUZZLEBOX**

Following on from the Puzzlebox interview, if anyone is interested in marketing a top-notch adventure for the ST, Richard Paynter can be contacted at the address below:

Richard Paynter,  
2 Lendrim Close,  
Brompton,  
Gillingham,  
Kent.

**THE ADVENTURE HELPLINE  
REMINDER OF NEW OPENING TIMES**

The *Adventure Helpline* is now no longer open on Sundays, but is on Saturdays. So the new times are:

Monday - Friday : 3.00 pm until 8.00 pm  
Saturday : 10.00am until 5.30pm  
Sunday : Closed

Please adhere to these times and try not to call the other numbers with your problems. This also works in reverse; do not ring up the *Helpline* with orders for games or queries as we will not be able to help. Ring up on any other time and you'll just get Vera!

**FAX**

Andy MacDonald has lost all his saved game positions for *Police Quest 2* on the ST. Can anyone help. He wants to return to his position at the Motel. Contact him evenings and weekends on (0428) 727019. If it's any help he has *Leisure Suit Larry 2* saved game positions to swap!

**INTERESTED IN FOOTIE?**

Agent David Shepherd seeks enthusiasts of English League Soccer to join FREE playtest of an unprecedented Soccer PBM game. Contact him through the club, or phone (0274) 587153.

**CHEAT SHEET**

Press Down **(SHIFT)** + Type  
IN 'FUND' FOR AN EXTRA  
£10,000 EVERY TIME  
IT IS PRESSED!

**OOPS!**

In Issue Twelve, we left out the address to contact DMC Games, runners of the PBM game *The Hunting II*. So here it is:

DMC Games,  
2 Pemerton Road,  
Basingstoke,  
Hants.,  
RG21 2LW.

Enclose an SAE for details! Start-up: £10.

DEMON present

**MIDNIGHT THIEF**

By D. Thomas

You, a thief born in a small town on the southern coast of Harlon. Thieving of all kinds are everyday sort of events to you. A professional is what you could call yourself, earning a living by carrying out jobs for people who don't have the ability. The man who approaches you in the tavern seems normal. He asks you to bring a number of items to an address in Wind Street. What could be wrong with that? What starts out as a simple task quickly turns into a twisting tale of murder, treachery and demonology with you at its centre.

Illustrated interactive fiction for the Commodore Amiga, which includes packaging, adventure guide and map. Send cheque payable to D. Thomas for £4.50 to 29 Llewellyn St, Glynneath, West Glam, SA11 5AF.

WOT MYSTIC SPIRAL

Send all inclusions for the Dead Letter Box to the Club address marking the envelope:  
FAO Dead Letter Box.

ELVIRA, ELVIRA  
MY PANTS R ON FIRE

AWAY  
AWAY  
AWAY

August / September 1999

# FOR YOUR EYES ONLY...

RING  
RING



**Ring! Ring! Ring! -click-**  
"The Man In Black here, ringing from the cupboard under the stairs, complete with new Phonocard and a pocketful of back-up ten pences. Have encountered a large increase in the number of letters coming through to us at the moment, especially due to the Mega-Q questionnaire replies that arrive daily. There's been a great response - and all I can say is keep them coming and we'll publish the results next Issue. Here is a real chance for you to change the shape of Confidential's to come. Anyway, let's get things sorted..."

Dear Man In Black,

Enclosed, please find the shining star in the Urquhart firmament, namely *The Wayfarer's Inn*. Personally, I think it's a work of genius, but that might be a slightly biased opinion. The good thing about it is that it is a 'one-off' with an 'option to renew' should the demand be so great!

What a shame that you weren't looking for an Assistant Editor some month's ago, I'm sure that my particular brand of insanity would've added a singularly warped touch to the Confidential pages. The puzzles are getting devilishly tricky these days. I'm stuck on the first one of the Acronizyms (Eight blondes in a brothel? Eight Biscuits in a biscuit-barrel?), and as for the crossword.... Ouch! I can't remember the spelling of that silly title *Konyashi Baru*?!

If you ever contact those 'Messiahs of the Menacing Mission' (the FTL Crew) tell them that I would like to see a 'haunted house' *Dungeon Master* complete with secret panels library doors, zombies, mummies, were-

wolves, slime and all those other normal monsters from the old 50's horror flicks. And bash 'em over the head a few times for making *Chaos* too easy!

I see you still haven't taken up my suggestion of showing a Page 3 version of Vera, the damsel with the duster, the commie with the cleaning fluid, the wielder of the wide nozzled Domestos. Why don't you raffle her rumpled stockings for Telethon? Oh dear, I think I must be ready for another cold shower.... Brrrr... That's better, well I hope you and yours are doing fine. Any news on *Hound of Shadow* or *Ooze* problems?

Best wishes, Ian Urquhart.

*The Man In Black says:* Thanks for the short story, which as you will by now have seen, is included in this very Issue. Sorry to disappoint you, but we now have an Assistant Editor. His name is Dave Perry and his talents will be seen in time for the dreaded Issue Thirteen. As to the other questions; we passed on your suggestions and moans at the recent FTL interview, we have full solutions on the Helpline for both *Hound of Shadow* and *Ooze*, and, no, we are not going to push up the subscription to Confidential by making Vera a centrefold! Perhaps she can be persuaded to model the new T-Shirts? Hum, there's an idea...

Dear Confidential,

I thank you for *Sim City* which arrived safely yesterday morning, several weeks and a price reduction after I ordered it, with *Drakkhen*, in early April. *Drakkhen* arrived quite quickly, together with a price list showing its price reduced from the £15.49 + £1.50. I paid to £13.99 inclusive, a difference of £3.00. I was a bit miffed.

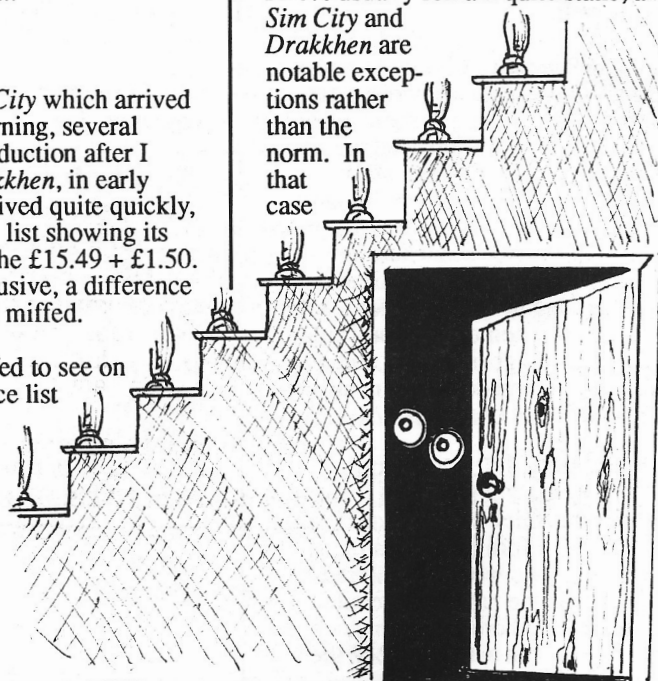
I am even more miffed to see on the June/July '90 price list enclosed with *Sim City* that it also was reduced in price, from the £15.99 + £1.50 at the time of my order in April to £13.99 inclusive, a dif-

ference of £3.50. Should the prices charged be those ruling at the date of despatch? You may recall asking me for more cash to cover a price increase for *Chaos Strikes Back* - it seemed a little unfair and totally one-sided at the moment. I appreciate that you are in business and obviously fix your prices to be profitable and competitive but someone in your organisation knew of an imminent price reduction for these two programs at the time of receipt of my order. The total difference of £6.50 equates with a ten pack of your lovely Sony D/S disks - not a sum to be sneezed at particularly if, like me, you are a 52 year-old disabled worker with an asthmatic cat who has an expensive consultant Vet (he was too poorly to be accepted by the pussy equivalent of BUPA).

I know that you are all very busy as THE club, quite rightly goes from strength to strength, but if someone could find the time to consider the question of price changes occurring between date of order and date of despatch, letting me have a comment I would be grateful.

Yours faithfully, Tom O'Toole.

*The Man In Black says:* The reason for the price difference is due to batches of stock bought from our suppliers. Prices usually remain quite static, and *Sim City* and *Drakkhen* are notable exceptions rather than the norm. In that case





the new batch of stock was obtained at a better price and it is impossible to send back everyone's cheques to get amendments; in time and materials it just isn't cost effective. As for *Chaos*, misinformation about the recommended retail price was the cause for that increase, not any oversight from our sales team.

Dear Man in Black,

Several times in the Confidential magazine you have had requests as to whether this or that Infocom game is available for the Amiga.

I can confirm the following titles, because I have them as originals: *A Mind Forever Voyaging*, *Ballyhoo*, *Beaurocracy*, *Beyond Zork*, *Cui-throats*, *Deadline*, *Enchanter*, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Hollywood Hi-jinx*, *Infidel*, *Journey*, *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, *The Lurking Horror*, *Moonmist*, *Nord and Bert Couldn't Make Head or Tail of It*, *Planetfall*, *Plundered Hearts*, *Seastalker*, *Sherlock*, *Shogun*, *Spellbreaker*, *Starcross*, *Stationfall*, *Suspended*, *Trinity*, *Wishbringer*, *Witness*, *Zork Zero*, *Zork Trilogy*.

The only titles missing are *Arthur*, *Suspect* and *Sorcerer* all of which I have seen for the Amiga. I could have brought both *Suspect* and *Sorcerer* but didn't, for which I could kick myself now.

If you know of anyone who wants a copy of *Zork II*, Adam's World in Harrow had one only in stock a couple of weeks ago. They had a couple of titles in their shops in Finchley and Edgware as well.

It is an awkward suggestion to make, bearing in mind the copywrite situation, but perhaps there is some way that the people with titles that are now unobtainable except by the most extraordinary luck, could exchange copies with those who have titles they might need? If Mr. Biancheri has *Suspect*, I would break a lifetime rule of No Copying to exchange for a copy of *Trinity*. Not something you could actively encourage of course, but desperate times breed desperate measures as someone once observed.

Yours sincerely, J. P. Mortimore.

*The Man In Black says:* Thanks very much for the information. As far as our views go, we would see no reason not to include the names of people who still have where Infocom stock; as long as we do not actually stock the

product here! This would make an ongoing section in the Dead Letter Box. Rumours do suggest though that Infocom back titles will be brought out in the near future without the fancy packaging (unless it's absolutely necessary). Watch this magazine for news. Anyway, whose next? Oh no, not him again!...

Dear Mr. In Black,

Come to think of it, that's a very curious name, is it a German extraction? Enough of the chit chat. Nice to see that Lockwood and the Magnificent Ten (?) made it in admirable style through the dangers of splatting one another with paintballs. It must have been a slow month... what's next? How Vera vacuumed the carpet? Not that I'm knocking the Terminator article, I just find Vera so much more exciting!

And another two members join the 'gang'. Sweetie and Mutley? Where do you get them?? Rent-a-nickname? However, I was very pleased to see that Buddy Flunkie, the well-known macho no-hoper from Scunthorpe has found himself a NEW MAN! Now all we've got to do is surgically remove that rather nasty-looking sword from his groin!

Here's to Vera and the furtherment of office cleaning equipment.

Yours,

Bewildered from Budapest (aka, Ian Urquhart).

PPS. Tell Otto I've got it and if he wants it, it'll cost him a HUGE amount of jelly babies!

*The Man In Black says:* I'll be sure to pass it on, Ian...

**Well before Ian Urquhart can pen another letter for the Letters File, I'll be off. Hope to hear from you all again and a big sorry to Flustered of Fenchurch, who fainted at the sight of the picture of the bullet in last Ish! Don't worry the artist has been ritually shot! Bye for now..." beep - beep - beep -click-tchuck-**

\* \* \* \*

## CONFIDENTIAL back editions

The strange thing about adventures is that they are so timeless; you can go back and still enjoy games that were written five years ago - and sometimes they are even better!

Confidential's a bit like that too really. As it's coverage is not geared around what is up-to-the-minute, back editions contain articles and stories that make great reading even now.

So why don't you find out just what you've been missing. And for £2.50, you don't have to loot a dragon's horde to afford them.

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**ISSUE TWO** Exxos. Crazy Dwarf LRP, Behind the scenes at the PC Show

**ISSUE FOUR** Computer Chess Tournament, MirrorWorld MUG, Elite vs FOFT

**ISSUE SIX** Scapeghost, Kingdom of Zork, Joe Dever interview

**ISSUE SEVEN** Horror Special! Elvira, Mike Woodroffe, Jacqui Lyons in Russia

**ISSUE TEN** Adventure School, Arcania PBM, Ultima VI reviewed

**ISSUE ELEVEN** Christy Marx interview, Future Worlds, Adventure School revisited

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out - we don't  
do reprints!**

# The Official Secrets Mega-Q

Please fill in and return either separately or included with your next order

## GENERAL:

Age ..... Male/Female ..... Computer .....  
 Which was your first issue of Confidential? Issue No. ....  
 Which other magazines do you read? .....  
 How many other people read your copy of Confidential? .....  
 How many games do you buy on average each month? .....  
 What influences you most when you buy software? .....  
 What category of games do you enjoy most? .....

## CONFIDENTIAL:

Please list your five best articles and worst articles in order:

(1) .....	(1) .....
(2) .....	(2) .....
(3) .....	(3) .....
(4) .....	(4) .....
(5) .....	(5) .....

Please rate (Bad, OK, Good or Essential) the following articles in Confidential (if you have not read these just leave blank)::

Psst...A Word From The Boss Upstairs .....	Little Psst Downstairs .....
Agent Orange's News File .....	Personnel File .....
MugScan .....	Dead Letter Box .....
Bestiary File .....	Bixby Cartoon .....
Play-By-Mail section .....	Live Role-Playing .....
Puzzle Pages : Cryptic Crossword .....	Other Puzzles .....
For Your Eyes Only...The Letters Page .....	SpeakEasy .....
Confidential Papers : The Short Story .....	BattleGround .....
Novice Adventurer's School .....	In-depth game reviews .....

Do you think the humour in the magazine is; too much, just right, too little? .....  
 What would you like to see in Confidential? .....  
 Should the magazine lean; more towards adventures, more away from adventures, or in another direction completely (please state)? .....

What do you think of the following services offered by the Clubs (Bad, OK, Good or Essential)?

Prices .....	Special Offers .....
Buyer's Guide .....	Despatch Service .....
Individual Game Despatch .....	7-day Sales Hotline .....
Notification of delays .....	Adventure Helpline .....

For the record, could you vote for your favourite adventure games of the past year:

1st .....	2nd .....	3rd .....
Best Role-Playing Game .....	Best Strategy/Simulation.....	
Best Action Game .....	Best Brain Game .....	

Do you participate in (or are you interested in reading about) any of the following (in all cases specify):

Role-Playing Games .....	Films and Videos .....
Live Role-Playing .....	Books, Comics and Fanzines .....
Play-By-Mail .....	Records and Music .....
Board Games .....	Historical Re-enactment .....
Other .....	

Thank you for your time in filling out this Questionnaire. Please forward (or a copy) to us at the O/S address. We repeat the Mega-Q here for all those who missed it last Issue.



BOSS,  
I KNOW EVERYTHING  
MEET ME AT 2 PM.  
SAME PLACE.  
J.T.

